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Lenten soliloquies for private and public use

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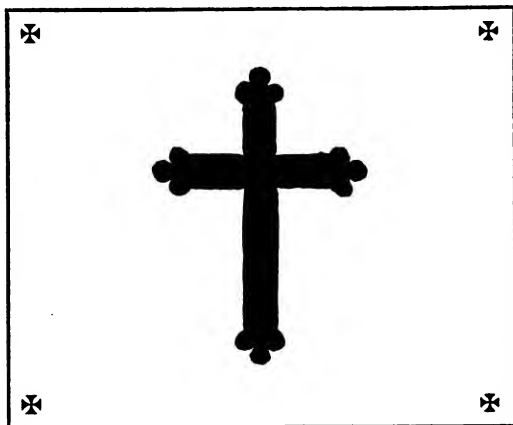


R. A. Beech-

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LENTEN SOLILOQUIES

FOR PRIVATE AND PUBLIC USE



BY WILLIAM EDWARD McLAREN,
D.D., L.L.D., BISHOP OF CHICAGO.

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ASH-WEDNESDAY.



HIS is Ash-Wednesday morning, and its atmosphere is charged with solemnity. It comes as an interruption, and no doubt it is an unwelcome one to many. That feeling of aversion is not unfamiliar to my memory, but with the coming of this Lent I resolve to refuse it any hospitality within my breast, and at the same time to thank God for this break in my soul's life, which, though the color of its skies may be sombre, ought by God's mercy to bring in for me brighter days and a sunnier walk with Him.

2. Quietly but with a determined mind I put myself in the presence of my Father. I do not summon Him from some remote habitation as if He were not already and always near me. Too

long have I deemed Him to be at hand only when I called upon Him in times of prayer or when I felt some special need, just as if His presence were not an atmosphere inclusive of all being, as if I did not always need Him, as if He were not as near to me when unremembered as when I am diligently seeking Him. What a lesson I learn from the poet! Miss Weld in her reminiscences of Tennyson speaks of his realization of the divine presence. She says, "nothing that others ever spoke to me and nothing I ever read, even in the pages of the Bible, ever made the impression upon me that his words and manner did when he would say to me, in exactly the same natural way as a child would express his delight at his father making him his companion: 'God is with us now on this down, as we two are walking together, just as truly as Christ was with the disciples on the way to Emmaus; we cannot see Him, but He, the Father, and the Saviour, and the Spirit, are nearer perhaps now than then to those that are not afraid to believe the words of the apostles about the actual and real presence of God and His Christ with all who yearn for it.' I said I thought such a near actual presence would be awful to most people. 'Surely the love of God takes away and makes us forget all our fear,' he answered. 'I should be

sorely afraid to live my life without God's presence, but to feel He is by my side now just as much as you are, that is the joy of my heart.' And I looked on Tennyson as he spoke, and the glory of God rested upon his face, and I felt that the presence of the Most High had indeed overshadowed him."

3. I come to God bare and empty. A man is empty before Him when he knows and deplors and confesses the fact that the soul cannot subsist on viands which not only fail to supply nourishment, but spread venom through his veins; that the sunshine of the human heart is not self-derived but issues from the sun; that only he truly renounces himself who does not resume himself; that in offering himself to God he must keep nothing back, and if he has nothing to offer but a broken, scarred, and crippled soul, he must give Him all that is left of it; that man was made for a nobler destiny than to indulge his lower propensities and prefer the flesh-pots of Egypt to the white manna from heaven;—such a man is empty before God. And thus I come to God, just an empty and naked soul, as if I were disembodied, passed out of this into another world, banished from every present interest and association, standing within the solemn precincts of divine reality—a spirit

with no clothing but the sackcloth of penitence, and no offering but a broken heart.

4. I come to God with a real hunger to exchange this "far country" of my worldliness for the fatherland of purified souls, and I beg of Him that my desire may grow into a passion so strong that good resolutions shall crystallize into achievements.

5. I come to Him breaking away from myself. One reason why I have so little force of faith, so little joy of hope, so little appreciation of God, is that I do not tear loose from everything and put vigor into my pursuit of holiness. Sloth is a mortal sin, for God demands correspondence with His grace, not negligence of it. It is more dangerous than wide-awake wickedness, because, while all sin lacerates the conscience, sloth also stupefies it. It requires immense effort to get free from this state of torpidity. No tender little tear of regret will meet the case. This is an enemy that will not be politely bowed out of the house. This is one of the sins which have to be "resisted unto blood," that is, a man had better die than be conquered by it. A score of Lents will do nothing for torpid Christians if they do not enter on them with their life in their hands. The only persons who take the kingdom of heaven are those who use violence, and this chiefly against themselves.

{ There is a vast distance between desire and determination, and a vaster between determination and achievement. He does well who desires, but better if he determine to possess, and best if he persevere until determination merges in possession. Desire without determination is an eagle who does not spread his wings, and determination without perseverance is as if he should fold his pinions in the mid heaven. Deliver me, good Lord, from resting in myself, in my baptism, in my confirmation, in my respectability, in anything short of Thyself, and give me grace to persevere; for what are beginnings worth if they are not continued and ended in Thee? Giving me the morning, Thou dost promise the evening only after a long day of faithful labor.

6. I wish this to be my best Lent, but I foresee that I shall have to be a very strenuous man to make it such. Like one who is caught in the undertow, I must put forth a supreme effort to gain the solid beach. An angry surf shows no consideration for one who abandons himself to it. Let me confess that conflicts do not please me. O, why does not God make the long agony unnecessary? Why does not the Spirit conquer my will by a fiat, and impart a good Lenten fervor at once? I need not ask myself the question, for I know that it is because He prefers to recognize my

liberty, and to train that gift aright rather than sacrifice freedom to necessity; for a paralyzed will is a dead will, as dead to right choices as to wrong. His purpose is not to benumb, but to purify it; and therefore He persuades rather than compels, and so gains my love and loyalty instead of my coerced submission. There are many things possible to His power which are inconsistent with His purpose. Since then it is I who am the obstructionist, not the Father, let me be impatient with myself, not unto discouragement but to new fervor and resoluteness.

7. And I must come to God fasting. The tyranny of self-love rises in protest against this pruning-knife, which is evidence that there are habits of self-indulgence to be cut off and cast away. He who will not fast is enslaved to his senses, and cannot please God. The purpose of the fast is to attack, break down, and utterly destroy this tyranny, and therefore the appetites when they cry for more must be made to feel the mailed hand of restraint. There is something better in life than indulgence, and an honest fast reveals it. Wisely does the Church require a measure of abstinence, and be it my delight to obey her command. I perceive how critical is the need of ascertaining to what degree my soul is enslaved to the senses, and as I wish to know the

worst I shall deprive pride of its opportunity, and fast without appearing to men to fast. Especially do I resolve to abstain from such things ordinarily allowable as are hard to give up, and I will be honest about it.

One of the master spirits of the Oxford movement was Richard Hurrell Froude. His leading trait was not his ability, though he was an intellectual leader, but his honesty. He fairly worshipped reality and straightforwardness. He could not endure profession without practice, and it was said of him that when he fasted, he *did really fast*. There was no playing at the thing with Froude. He may have been too severe, but better that than secret neglect, which is hypocrisy, or frank repudiation, which is an impeachment of our Lord's example.

THE SECOND DAY



COME to God through His Son to secure renewed forgiveness. But I know that I must first be able to say in sincerity, "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." A heart too hard to forgive is too hard to be forgiven. Our Lord has declared that if one honestly wishes to excuse an offending brother, if one harbors no hatred, no desire to retaliate, if he does not spurn extenuations and finds himself more ready to excuse than to accuse, if he watches for an opportunity to become reconciled, if he is determined to forgive even should the offense be repeated, and to forgive as often as the offender is willing to be reconciled, he shall assuredly obtain the pardon of his own sins. But only the merciful can find the

throne of mercy; a hard heart gropes in darkness. We could not make ourselves believe that a vindictive temperament not diverted to the practices of love can possibly be in favor with God. There is not a scintilla of evidence that He will forgive me without repentance, and if I retain my sin, to repent is impossible.

2. In all that I do and suffer during this Lent, deliver me from being too much bound up in my own interests. I have a primary duty to this soul of mine, but what of the kinship of all humanity? I must not forget my brethren, *the Millions*. The world is a vast community of one blood, with one Father, having a common life, and a fellowship in which each individual partakes of the common benefits and hazards; for "whether one member suffer all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it." Our Lord identified Himself with the undivided world that He might reconcile the world unto Himself. If there exist a closer relation with Him by reason of individual reconciliations, these are not inconsistent with the all-embracing love of God for the world, for they only show that the nearer men come to Him the more distinct their vision of His love. To the degree that is practicable, this His universal benevolence should be imitated by all men. Nothing is more effec-

tive in doing away with partition walls, silencing shibboleths, and broadening the mind of partisans and separatists. There are many forms of error to be deplored, but the greatest is to ignore the universal brotherhood of man.

For this reason I ought to feel myself lifted into sympathy with my race. The cry of one penitent heart is the cry of the whole world. My kind has risen against God's will, and I am implicated with this rebellious solidarity. Therefore "first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings" should "be made for all men," as S. Paul exhorts. How suggestive is the plural structure of the Lord's Prayer! The tension of personal repentance may be severe, but I am obligated to enter into sympathy with the sin and sorrow of the world. God, who knows all, sees a thousand-fold more that is good than we can; nevertheless, it lies on the surface of things so perceptibly that even charity's calm face flushes with indignation at the spectacle that this world, the object of an intimate affection, is alienated from Him. Many forget Him, neither is He in all their thoughts. Other many are indifferent; like Gallio, they care for none of these things. Many nourish a positive aversion of mind from His requirements. Many are actively inimical to Him, gloating over their

misdeeds, like that terrible Aaron in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*:

"Tut, I have done a thousand dreadful things
As willingly as one would kill a fly,
And nothing grieves me heartily indeed
But what I cannot do ten thousand more."

What a type of the possibilities of infamy to which woman can descend was that Madame Du Barry, disgracefully associated with Louis XV. of France, who was as the beasts are. Life was to her a carnival of lust, a bacchanalian orgy. It ended at the guillotine in 1793. Upon arriving at the scaffold, it was necessary to employ force to attach her to the fatal plank, and her last words were "Mercy! mercy! but one moment longer, but one——" and all was said.

When I think how humanity bleeds, how false Christs delude the weak, how hidden gangrenes of vice fester in the vitals of society, "rivers of waters run down mine eyes because they keep not Thy law," and I feel a new resolve coming to life in my heart to ask for all men all that I ask for myself, and for all the spiritual flock of Christ—its shepherds, its sheep, and its lambs—that they may be shielded from the wolves of this dark time, and that His glory may outshine the secular splendor of the age. And to the end that my prayers may be effectual, I shall unite them primarily

and chiefly with the merits of my Divine Redeemer in His ceaseless intercession, and with the glory, the love, the power, the beauty, and the majesty of His Person; and then, secondarily, with that holy confederacy of intercession who evermore besiege the throne of the Most High with the importunity of perfected love, and who, with desire for the enhancement of His glory and the participation by those whom they have left behind, in the consummate joy of heaven, cease not by day and by night from fervent prayers on our behalf, seeing, as they do, more clearly than when they were here with us, the needs of the world, the prevailing power of intercession, and the good will of Him to whom the prayer of the upright is His delight.

THE THIRD DAY



HAVE begun my Lent with the resolution to go to God, but alas! I know from experience how much I am like Hamlet, of whom Coleridge said he lost the power of action in the energy of resolve. I can improve upon my resolution to come to God by *coming*. I do come to Thee, O my Father, with wonder and praise, with awe, admiration and love.

2. God!

I sink down deep into that thought—I who am so unworthy to think it; and under its inspiring touch I look out upon the world and within upon myself with greater clarity of vision. Now it becomes painfully obvious to me that the things which have been absorbing my mind are scarcely entitled to a secondary place in the scale of im-

portance. It flashes upon me with new force that human life is working towards an end which shall survive everything but that life itself. The Almighty is my End, and everything is *in comparison* only the baseless fabric of a dream. To make myself the center, this world my arena, and my will the law of all action, is a total subversion of the divine order, and to the extent that it is realized it cancels God's authority in His own world. Even to oppose sins in my own strength increases my servitude to sin, which reminds me that it was said of Napoleon on his return from Elba, that to send troops against him was only to send him reinforcements. Now, likewise it becomes apparent to me as never before, that He who is my End is now my Father, that His is the only mind which does not misunderstand me, which judges me in righteousness, the only one who, knowing me, deals with me without despising me, who has compassion upon me in my penitence, and is charitable to my infirmities as well as patient with my lapses. Now I see again the Friend to whom I can pour out my confidences, as of old, without fear of betrayal, and from whom I may receive infallible counsel. It is a shame to me that I have made so little of Him who is ever doing so much for me. "When ye glorify the Lord exalt Him as much as ye can; for even yet He will far exceed: and when ye

exalt Him, put forth all your strength, and be not weary; for ye can never go far enough. . . . There are yet hid greater things than these be, for we have seen but a few of His works." And yet, what ingratitude I have shown! Now it all comes back to me that His goodness has been the light of my path and the joy of my life, even when I perceived it not.

3. The truth which shines out above all others is, that while we are God's creatures, the Creator has permitted us to say that He is ours. There is a mutuality of interest each in the other. All that we know of Him shows that He is actuated by an immense desire to communicate Himself, that there is in this infinite Being an inclination towards us which is not unlike the affection of a parent, only that this infinite love is more ardent and active than parental love in its most pure and sacrificial moments. It is not difficult to assent to this as a stated proposition, but it requires effort when we try to blend it devotionally with our daily thoughts; and there are occasions in which we realize what we are as rebellious and ungrateful children, when it seems too amazing to believe. Perhaps it is because of our own almost irrepressible antipathy to those who wrong us that we suspect Him of a vengeful attitude; but such a surmise would manifestly be monstrous, for "As I

live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked should turn from his way and live." This Lent finds me fairly luxuriating in blessings that flow from no other hand than His, and yet how inappreciative I am! How hard it is to maintain gratitude as He maintains goodness! At any pains I must lead truant mind and heart back to the school of love. I shall never truly love God until I am convinced that God is the author of everything that makes life worth living. There is no exercise more suitable to this season of self-scrutiny than the studied enumeration of past blessings, so far as they can be recalled. Thousands cannot be recalled because, although they were substantial realities, they fell gently like the dew from heaven, and left no mark on consciousness. But the remembered blessings, how countless they are also, and how am I overwhelmed with shame when I remember my insensibility to them! It is enough to break a man's heart to think that a rational creature can despise such riches of goodness and forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth to repentance. When the soul sinks into the dust at the feet of Him whom it has wronged, it is weighed down as much by the plentitude of blessings as by the burden of penitence.

THE FOURTH DAY



GOING away into the wilderness of Lent, I remind myself that I thus place my feet in the blessed steps of the Saviour, and that when I kneel in prayer I am taking the very posture which He observed whenever He communed with the Father. Place and posture having been forever sanctified by His example, may my prayers through His find audience in heaven, and as to Him, so to me may angels come and minister.

I welcome the advent of Lent, and I have put my soul at its disposal; but I cannot ignore the presence within me of a feeling of disquietude and dejection which does not permit me, with the holy priest of Bemerton, to call this the "*deare feast of Lent.*" When this feeling is analyzed, its

cause is discovered. My half-hearted life has me in its grasp, and its teeth dig deep into my conscience. Shame and confusion of face overtake me, and a feeling of bitterness bites its way into my heart. O foolish, foolish man, how could you have permitted yourself to become so ready a victim to your evil propensity? Why so craven a surrender to the world, the flesh, and the devil? Why were your thoughts so dissevered from God and your whole life so selfish in conduct, so earthly in tone, and so spiritless in devotion? Sharp arrows indeed are these questions when they are driven home!

I know that a sincere desire to serve God exists within me. "Thy testimonies have I claimed as my heritage forever," and at times I have said, "they are the very joy of my heart;" but immediately an opposing tendency sprang up, which overpowered holy desires and unnerved the will. It makes me unhappy and almost disconsolate to think that I am liable to repeat this painful experience. When this Lent has passed, must I go back and be my old self again? Are the same battles and the same defeats to be renewed? After breathing pure air for a few days, must I return to the noisome vapors that were wont to stifle me? Are the resolves I shall make to become like those I have made, fleeting as the mists of the morning?

I am weary of that way, and desire a more excellent one. Perhaps I have made the mistake of presuming the life of the soul to correspond with the life of the body, which goes on mechanically while we make little note of its progress; but the soul-life is intelligent, spiritual, voluntary, and when it is healthy we love God and know that we love Him. Whatever may be its conditions they are constantly reported to our consciousness, nor can we with impunity leave it to care for itself. The soul not only needs care, but it needs a vigilance that wearies not, and an industry that is strenuous. The tendency to revert to former conditions has to be overcome. Relaxation of effort may be natural, but there is no rest from serving God: rest comes *in* serving Him.

The desire after God, and this indisposition to seek Him, actively reveal the presence in the soul of two opposing forces. This is also a fact of experience, and not a figment of spiritual pessimism. S. Paul was a person not afraid to look at himself in the light of his consciousness. He felt these contrariant forces—he calls them laws—and he tells us that he was able to obey the law of God without condemnation because, being in Christ Jesus, he walked not “after the flesh but after the Spirit.” The alternative was obvious to him: “for if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye

through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live;" and, as he was one who could be classed with those "men of violence" who take the kingdom of heaven by force, we find him mortifying his members, and resisting unto blood, striving against sin.

It is evident that the failures of the past which now haunt me were effects of my neglect to keep in mind these opposing laws. There was neither foresight nor vigilance enough, force nor fight enough. Why shall I go into another Lent if I do not arm myself beforehand in those things wherein I have been so unsoldierlike? Only present accumulation of strength gives assurance of future triumph.

2. Therefore repentance should be, as it were, a moral tempest, but not of necessity in the sense of an outward burst of emotion; for there are feelings too deep for tears, thoughts that grow lucid by silence, and fervor too warm for words. Real emotion is not an impulse which flames for a moment and thence descends to ashes; it is self-possessed and practical. Newman defined fervor by saying it consisted in these three things: regularity, punctuality, and exactness—which is a paradox to those only who have been taught to mistake the flash of a meteor for the glow of a planet. When we speak of repentance as a tempest, we

mean a substantial storm. When we say "we have erred and strayed from Thy ways like lost sheep," let repentance sweep over us like a storm, let it overpower us, let it dash to the earth every vestige of self-conceit; it cannot be too violent if it drive the broken heart to the shore of mercy where there is life forevermore.

3. There is a sorrow for sin which is merely natural regret, and is only another sorrow added to the rest, utterly abortive to minister pardon and peace to weary souls. But how different the effect of looking at sin as God sees it! Of course He abominates it; in our most poignant moments of contrition we cannot hate it in degree as He does; but, also—and here light and fair hope come in!—He is governed by a steadfast and consistent purpose to extricate us from this ghastly plight by teaching us how to find the way out of it, if we will be taught. He has planted the Cross and the Church in this world. He has surrounded us by Himself. He inspires us with heavenward desires, exposes the meanness and hazards of sin, convicts our minds of unreason and our wills of obduracy, instructs us in the science of holiness, trains us to seek all attainable perfection; in fine, does everything for us, everything except to take us out of school. He is verily an earnest God. If we look at sin as He does, we look at what all the

powers of heaven are seeking to overcome. Unless we respond to this divine ardor of mercy and co-operate with it earnestly, ours is a repentance that needs to be repented of. I have been weak in responding to mercy. Sensitive in conscience, I seem to find a fascination in Sinai's thunders, "my soul is full of trouble," "I am in misery and like unto him that is at the point to die," but my sorrow is the sorrow of fear. The natural man has not been subdued, and all this dejection of spirit is traceable to pride. It is not of the nature of humility to be discouraged when God bids penitence to look up without fear. Humility is too manly a virtue not to maintain its courage even in the depths of contrition. My duty, then, is in all quietness to surrender my broken heart to Him without suspicion of His mercy, without doubt of His welcome. Sin worketh death, but a sinful soul who immediately breaks away and speeds him to God shall discover how all things, even things that are evil, work together for good to them that love Him. He shall see how, if the sight of our virtues is apt to harm us, that of our sins may purify us. Be patient; progress is an undulation; even the valleys into which we descend help us forward to the summit of the delectable mountains.

THE FIFTH DAY



HIS season of special devotion acts as a stimulus upon the new life implanted within the Christian breast by the Holy Spirit. At the same time, as we are made aware by experience, the surviving propensities of the old nature assert themselves with unusual energy in seasons of spiritual revival. It becomes necessary therefore to refresh our views of this inward antagonism, so that the carnal mind shall not regain what it may have lost.

Every baptized person is, body and soul, a member of two sovereignties; of one in the order of nature, of the other by adoption in the order of grace. He has been emancipated in part from the servitude of sin, and has begun to enjoy the liberty wherewith Christ makes His people free, but these

advantages have been gained at the sword's point; for there is a radical antagonism between the two sovereignties. They work in opposite directions, like centripetal and centrifugal movements. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, for these are contrary the one to the other." The conflict which is in progress must continue until a decisive end is reached. So long as both forces maintain their strength, the contest will be distressing and the issue uncertain; for there will be an alternation of victories and defeats, ascensions towards God and lapses into the ways of the fleshly mind, gleams of light from happier skies than earth can behold and dismal nights of spiritual desolation. There will come propitious moments when the heart rises into mastery over natural aversion to God, and then moments when it will be, as it were, hypnotized and enslaved to "the will of the flesh." But no one can be satisfied with a drawn battle, least of all he who expects and demands the immediate preponderance of the Spirit. While we are faintly hoping that the day may come in some indefinite future, and scarcely heeding God's imperative Now, unrest and disappointment are ours. This accounts for the dearth of high religious development among us. How can there be any comfort or joy or sweet repose in God, how any abiding

fellowship with His Son, how any vigor of co-operation with the Holy Spirit, when we are consciously so feeble in our allegiance that any little excess of wrong desire and any enticing temptation can get the better of our trembling faith?

Happy is he who makes speed to die to the old man, and dies by crucifixion, if need be. Thrice happy he who will not for any bribe that can be offered suffer the old man to alternate with the new man. He who contracts the habitual determination to respond strongly to the "godly motions" of the Spirit is best equipped against sudden temptations of the flesh, against doubts and fears, against weariness in holy duties, against slackness in prayer. All the help of an omnipotent Father is with him, all the succor of angels and all the prayers of the saints, to fortify his predominant intention. He may not entirely escape wrong thoughts and enticements, but he will have learned not to be demoralized by them, and will promptly cast them out as spies and allies of the old man. He will also have learned that spiritual imperfections may be turned to good account in the renewal of vigilance, the rebuke of presumption, and the promotion of humility. They reveal the need of a more distinct surrender into the keeping power of God. They are alarm-signals to warn him not to permit the line between the law of the senses and

the law of faith to be obliterated. How terrible the thought that, having begun in the Spirit, he may end in the flesh, and all his fair prospect of heaven terminate in the wreck of a soul! That is the fate to which a half-hearted faith exposes itself, and all for want of unequivocal allegiance to the new man. It is a mournful reflection that many of the most flagrant enemies of religion are men who once tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost. Their old man triumphed, and they are "without God in the world." The Church mourns over their defection and suffers sorely by it. All the old light of love has gone out of their lives, and they are trying to find a substitute in darkness. In these days when the love of many waxes cold, it is painful to think of the contrast.

2. I am resolved that I shall no longer suffer this counterpoise of good and evil to continue. How can I, dear Lord, being Thine, not be wholly Thine? The spirit and the flesh are as the scales of a balance. When one rises, the other necessarily falls. I am resolved to escape the fearful consequences of an indecision which is in effect a surrender to the flesh. There is a passage in De Quincey's writings which impresses me as being a picture of the contrast between the fruits of the flesh and the Spirit. He describes in words of

weird eloquence some of his experiences as an opium-eater. They represent to my mind the brilliant, but hideous, outcome of a surrender to the law of sin and sense. It was the best the old man could do for him. After an ounce of laudanum, his mock heaven begins. "Under the connecting feeling of tropical and vertical sunlights, I brought together all creatures, birds, beasts, reptiles, all trees and plants, usages and appearances, that are to be found in all tropical regions, and assembled them together in China or Hindoostan. From kindred feelings I soon brought Egypt and all her gods under the same law. I was stared at, hooted at, grinned at, chattered at, by monkeys, by paroquets, by cockatoos. I ran into pagodas, and was fixed for centuries at the summit or in secret rooms; I was the idol; I was the priest; I was worshipped; I was sacrificed. I fled from the wrath of Brahma through all the forests of Asia; Vishnu hated me; Seeva laid wait for me. I came suddenly upon Isis and Osiris; I had done a deed, they said, which the Ibis and the crocodile trembled at. I was buried for a thousand years in stone coffins, with mummies and sphynxes, in narrow chambers, at the heart of eternal pyramids. I was kissed with cancerous kisses by crocodiles, and was laid, confounded with all unutterable abortions, amongst rude and Nilotic mud."

Compare this sparkling imbecility, this incoherent death-song of one who walked after the flesh, with those words of the Christian poet who walked after the Spirit.

- "Sunset and evening star,
And one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of the bar,
When I put out to sea,
- "But such a tide as, moving, seems asleep,
Too full for sound and foam,
When that which drew from out the boundless deep
Turns again home.
- "Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark!
And may there be no sadness of farewell,
When I embark;
- "For tho' from out our bourne of Time and Peace
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crossed the bar."

THE SIXTH DAY



IT IS my duty to discover myself, where I stand, whither I am tending, by severest examination. But what sphynxes we are to ourselves! I believe that there is less fallibility in the opinions I form with regard to others than in my self-measurements. Every man possesses a certain aroma of character which others scent readily, and himself not at all. He allows too much for his virtuous qualities and makes light of his faults, some of which he even counts with the former. He does not lament his own blunders as poignantly as he does those of others. Such delusions of self-love are innumerable, and the power of the Holy Ghost is needed to enable one to see himself as others see him.

2. Self-examination by itself has little value, however. If nothing is to be gained except knowledge, this is a case where ignorance is bliss. If I stop with such knowledge as I am able to get for myself, there is nothing but myself to stay me up; so I may as well gather my worthless rags about me, and return to the world from which I have retired for a season. That kind of knowledge is simply despair, for what profit is there in seeing myself as I am if I possess no power to better my condition? There is nothing to look for but the natural consequences of sin, and compassion is not a quality of natural law. It is inexorably retributive. Those who find in themselves nothing else to fall back upon should be thankful that God permits them to fall back on Him in order to their knowing themselves in some degree as He knows them, and that He strengthens them to endure the revelation without utter despair. Nine out of ten of those who are disposed to live more consistent lives make the crucial mistake of not finding themselves out, and consequently of trusting too much to their natural powers. They are like mariners who navigate their vessels through storms by the light at the masthead, rather than by the beacon that burns and flashes on the shore. There is no doubt of the truth of this, but it is difficult to account for the persistency of the bias

in favor of self. Do we really expect to make new terms with God? Are we aiming at a compromise gospel wherein man may divide honors with the Holy Ghost?

3. Our recourse to God must be clean and complete. Nothing retards the progress of the kingdom more than subjects who serve it with half a heart, and soldiers who are sometimes found fighting on the other side. How these neutral-tinted Christians crowd the line which marks off the Church from the world, as often on the far as on the hither side of it! The Hebrews who embraced Christ were cautioned to give diligence to enter into the eternal sabbath-rest that remaineth to the people of God, by the power of "the word of God" which, it was written, is "living, active, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart." He who humbly ceases from his search for self-knowledge by his own unaided efforts, and throws his inner being open to the searchlights of heaven, is assured against false estimates of himself, and puts himself in the way of a repentance which, if bitter to the taste, will be as honey in the heart. Such a repentance, attended by humiliation and

self-contempt, is crowned with pardon from heaven as perfect as heaven can give.

4. In the most impartial estimates which one may make there will be points of uncertainty. What was the precise moral demerit of such and such an act or omission? Doubtful cases are not apt to occur in the experience of those who give habitual preference to their own wishes and schemes, but they do sometimes occur to consciences of a finer texture who have made the will of God their supreme law, and are sensitive about offenses. God has no mind to suffer them to be entangled in difficulties which might seriously discourage them: on the contrary, He has made the path of duty so plain that wayfaring men, though fools, need not err therein. His words of guidance are so ample and lucid that when through infirmity any soul encounters a doubt, a little studious thought, and much humble prayer, will dispel it. And He has distinctly promised special illumination. "If any of you lacketh wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing doubting." And why should I doubt? Assurance of His faithfulness to His promises is the smallest tribute my faith can pay to such a God.

5. The promise, however, does not insure

signs and wonders. There have been exalted planes of progress in holiness where these have occurred, but in the ordinary stages of attainment special illumination for indistinct paths addresses itself to faith rather than to sight. The Holy Spirit certifies His mind to us in our use of means. He guides us by the precepts and example of Christ, and by counsels of holy men which have been confirmed by ages of experience. It is the Spirit who gives needed wisdom and the Spirit who dispels doubt, whatever the agency.

THE SEVENTH DAY



RETROSPECT of the irrevocable years in the fear of God, and the better knowledge of myself which the survey affords, compel me to confess that not one thing that I have done that was contrary to the will of God promoted my welfare, or contributed to my happiness. If occasionally there was a glitter like gold, a little time proved it to be base and worthless. On the contrary, memory tells quite another story of vexation and loss, defeat and heartache, as the outcome of that self-love and self-will which not only misled me into sin, but relaxed my already feeble efforts to lead a more consistent life. Memory also bears witness that in no single instance did the exercise of a loyal preference for the wishes of God fail to bring

inward peace and moral stamina; and often through the remedial mercy of heaven sins that would naturally have issued in death were despoiled of their power, and the soul, by the pains of discipline, was whipped around again into submission and then love. Let me take courage!

2. And amid all the struggles of self-will to become a law to itself by resenting and disowning the authority of God, how unswerving has been His consecration to His own design! He has not relaxed the demand of the law, nor has He winked at the least heinous of sins. How could He? Is not His law the image and expression of Himself? By conformity to it the likeness which was defaced may be restored, and hence obedience promotes the highest interests of man. The law points upwards far beyond the level of mere good behaviour, and leads to the most advanced attainments in sanctity; it is for obedience to follow and achieve them. This is true of all law, whether of Sinai, the Mount of Beatitudes, or Calvary. Always and everywhere one changeless will is proclaimed. In the spiritual sphere it is Cape Eternity.

This sublime poise, this ineffable serenity, is one of the most august revelations of the Divine character which we are permitted to contemplate. With what majesty does He summon us to accomplish the purpose of creation! His voice is insis-

tent, but it is the urgency of One who made us for Himself, and is calling us back to find rest in His unperturbed serenity.

“Rock of ages! cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee!”

It is this unchangeableness of good will as we see it manifested in the humanity of our Lord, yet towering above and beyond it, which invests Him with a more than human dignity. We catch glimmerings of spiritual splendor in Him which, were it not infinite, would render Him the most inexplicable of beings. These glimpses are wholly unaccounted for by any view however exalted which falls short of the truth of the Catholic Faith—“God of God, Light of Light, Very God of very God.”

To this wonderful Being I come, and at His feet bewail my imperfection. To lift one's eyes and gaze long on Him is repentance, for in His presence what am I? Such a repentance, so long as it keeps its eyes on Him, makes the heart glad in sorrow, and as full of hope as of contrition. But at the same time it must not shrink from the severities of a real repentance. *Life from death* is the Christian religion in a nutshell. Our Lord “died for us, that whether we wake or sleep we should live together with Him.” The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church. It is by dying

unto sin that we live unto God, that is, by being as one dead to the demands of unrighteousness we are able to yield our members servants to righteousness. This dying, especially in matters called little, is a mark of one who is alive in Christ, but it is an art to be learned, and one must patiently strive to acquire it.

The tongue must be crucified. The words of vanity and malice, of falsehood and deceit, of anger and detraction, must be throttled into silence. How this will thin out our conversations! And our thoughts—what need of the cross there! We may not be able to prevent the entrance of impure imaginations, suggestions of mental doubt, suspicions of others, and all that abominable cortegé of tempters that would allure us to ruin, but it is practicable to acquire habitual aversion to them, and to deal with them either by assault, God being our strength, or by flight, God being our refuge. And crucifixion is the only discomfiture of the tyranny of sense, and protection from its wrong desires. Not only the cross, but stake and faggot, fire and sword are needed, the menace to the heart that would love God being so great, and purity being so delicate a flower. If we do not mortify the lusts of our fleshly nature, they will turn and rend us. They will sensualize us, if we do not spiritualize them.

And note where the seat of the trouble is found. When the Scriptures speak of the flesh, they do not refer to the material body as the seat of sin, but to the fleshly mind, which finds occasions of sin in the body. The senses left to themselves would not transgress the limits of legitimate use. It is the corrupt heart which is the seat of lust; and this reveals to us the spot on which the cross must be planted, and the evil passions and propensities put to death. When that has been done, when by discipline and self-conquest they have been brought into subjection to Christ, then shall be fulfilled the saying of S. Paul, "To the pure all things are pure."

THE EIGHTH DAY



WHEN a wave of penitence sweeps over the soul, we infer the presence and potency of the Holy Spirit, who was sent, as the Lord just previous to His ascension, promised, to convince the world of sin. I am thankful that He does not wait for our call, or leave us to our own resources. He knows how much the baptized, who so often violate their vows and lapse into sin, need remission; and when He perceives that we are reduced to despair of self-recuperation, He imparts His grace, and gives "repentance to Israel." A good, strong, thorough detestation of the return which we have made for all the affluence of good He has poured upon us, proves that He has not left us to ourselves.

2. The response of a susceptible soul is immediate acknowledgment of sin and ill-desert—it

is all too true, and I confess it with shame! Which is not only a becoming response but also one of evident obligation. Acknowledgment is necessarily prior to remission, because repentance is incomplete without it. To withhold confession would be equivalent to a disavowal of the testimony of the Spirit, a sin not consistent with Christian character, and contradictory of our Lord's teaching. Being so essential to repentance it should be thorough, sins must be specified, and their aggravations acknowledged without excuses or saving clauses. We should bear in mind that we are at the feet of Him who frowns upon hypocrisy as He smiles on the courage of a true humility; He knoweth what is in man, and therefore we should not vainly think that any of our past offenses can be concealed. True, we are no longer under condemnation for those which have been pardoned; of them we can say that as far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us; but the remembrance that we were the authors of them will form a wholesome stimulus in our broken-hearted petitions, for the pardon of unforgiven sins. Of these we should put particular emphasis on such as are most flagrant. There are degrees of heinousness, as conscience bears witness, and we should not overlook these differences. We are sometimes tempted to dwell on the minor

offenses, and to slight the greater. The straight road to a good confession is frankly to own up to the worst, and bemoan the great sins of deliberation which we may have committed. No sin is so small that we can afford to pass it by, but there is a rule of proportion which it is not wise to disregard—the danger being a morbid exaggeration of venial faults which, with sufficient sorrow for the more heinous, creates tangles in the conscience and retards spiritual growth. I am a child of God and it becomes me to go to Him as a child, avoiding an over-scrupulous spirit, which is a form of pride more to be deplored than the faults over which it suffers qualms. The deep detestation with which we deplore the more aggravated sins will include and overspread all other shortcomings.

3. A delicate conscience laying itself bare out of love for God must often remind itself that the consciousness of being under the influence of some allurements, or attraction, or solicitation to commit sin, does not of itself put one under condemnation. Temptations therefore are not properly a ground of confession so long as they do not implicate the will. There are many assaults upon the soul for which the assailant alone is responsible. The assailed becomes criminated only when he takes pleasure in yielding. On the other hand, the loyal will, consciously subject to enticement, has its aus-

picious opportunity to recoil and take refuge in the shadow of merciful wings until these temptations be overpast, the consequence being a pleasure that does not sting, a joy that does not fail, the approval of conscience, and the favor of heaven. Injected evil thoughts, impure imaginations, mental doubts, rebellious impulses, weariness of conflict, and other forms of temptation, though their touch is distressing, have no power to tarnish the soul, provided they are spurned; and, if rejected, they are none of ours. A holy man of England's Church in the thirteenth century said: "The feeling of these temptations defiles the soul no more than if they heard a hound bark, or felt the biting of a flea. They vex the soul indeed, but do not harm it, if so be a man despise them and set them at naught, for it is not good to strive with them, as if thou wouldst cast them out by mastery and violence, for the more they strive with them the more they cleave to them. And therefore they shall do well to divert their thoughts from them as much as they can, and set them upon some business. And if they still hang upon them, then it is good for them that they be not angry nor heavy through feeling of them; but with a good trust in God *bear them* (like a bodily sickness and scourge of our Lord for the cleansing of their sins, as long as He pleaseth) *out of love to Him*, even as He was will-

ing to be scourged and bear His cross for love of them." But all this, true though it be and averse to scrupulosity of a morbid kind, does not justify laxity when it comes to the confession of sins that are deliberate, voluntary, and in effect renunciatory of the will of God. Here is the opportunity of "the men of violence."

4. It is the dictate of nature as well as of religion that we make amends to those whom we have wronged. Reparation is an essential part of repentance and a logical result of confession. It is my duty, as one who has received the altogether priceless gift of forgiveness, to address all my powers to the noble duty of making up to God for that of His just due which I have withheld from Him. But how unequal to such a task I find myself, congenial though it is to my penitent love! It will require more than a lifetime prolonged to the utmost limit; more, I say, because the blessed duty of reparation will follow me into eternity. I cannot conceive how long it will require, but I know that I shall go to God with an immense deficiency to make up. All the time lost here will report itself there. The work of reparation will be one of keenest bliss, more keen than it was here, and the rapture of it will inundate the soul with joy, but it is questionable whether we shall ever feel that we have fulfilled the measure of love's debt. But

has not the intervention of Christ for us men and for our salvation discharged us from this obligation? I think many answer this question for themselves in the affirmative. Perish the affirmation! Christ is indeed our merciful Saviour and He delivers us from sin, but not from reparative service, present, prospective, or retrospective. How could any true soul be satisfied to escape the opportunity to fill up as far as possible the empty or half-filled measure of past obligations?

5. Penitence is crowned with absolution. For a thousand reasons, all of which have their home in God, a repenting man should look for pardon with utter confidence. But when he gets it he gets more than he asked for, and this is a thought too impressive not to be better appreciated.

Notice the absolution in the office of Holy Communion: "Pardon and deliver you from all your sins; confirm and strengthen you in all goodness; and bring you to everlasting life." Pardon is more than deliverance from liability to punishment. It carries with it a sacramental force or grace which makes for the sanctification of the soul. Not only is the old score wiped out, but new vigor is bestowed, which, if used, will render the contracting of other debts less easy. Human governors can remit penalties, but cannot impart a mind and will to do evil no more. This is the pre-

rogative of God, who is not unmindful of His sorrowing children. S. Paul reminded the Corinthians of the gracious rewards of their forgiveness, "what earnest care it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what longing, yea, what avenging."

THE NINTH DAY



LOVE for God and man expresses itself in many ways, of which the practice of abstinence referred to in the collect for last Sunday is one. Abstinence is of the nature of a stiff bridle upon all kinds of physical appetite, and through them upon the passions of the soul, to the end that man may be subjugated to the Spirit, and He be honored by the laurels of the triumph. It is not, however, a popular virtue. The drift is in the opposite direction, self-gratification having much to do with the prevailing type of Christian character. No contrast could be more dismal than that which exists between the self-seeking lives of many, and the hymn they often sing:

“Jesus! I my cross have taken
All to leave and follow Thee;
Naked, poor, despised, forsaken,
Thou from hence my all shalt be.”

It would be ludicrous if it were not criminal. It is one thing to sing of the cross, another to sing from it. If they would cease from scoffing at the high moral standards established by the Son of God, and put some asceticism into their selfish lives, they might become worthy of His name; but, as it is, our Lord Jesus Christ has nothing but contempt and indignation for hypocrisy, be it lax or puritanic, be it Christian or Jewish. He brought no glad tidings of great joy to those to whom life is worth living only for the self-gratification they can get out of it, and the self-denial they can evade. He was earnest with all the earnestness of God to save the world; but it was far from Him to look upon self-indulgence as a virtue, nor could He have toned down His standard to the conventional level without treason to heaven. He, manifesting infinite counsels, established the cross as the eternal antinomy of fleshly lusts and the proper sign of discipleship, as the avenue to spiritual happiness, and the only school in which the imitation of Christ can be practised. In other words, the contradiction of that fleshly will of which the distinctive feature is self-indulgence, is salvation. The attendant pains, not pleasant in themselves,

demonstrate the reality of the stand when the will takes up arms against itself and its propensities. Pain does not wear the outward semblance of pleasure, but it is true that the pain of self-denial accepted for the love of God leads to a more real pleasure than anything called by that name which indulgence furnishes. Happiness consists not in being surfeited with perishable delights, but in being so emptied of self that God may enter in and dwell there. This is what our Lord meant when He said, "He that loseth his life for My sake shall find it." He begrudges no man that which is necessary; it is meet and right that he should provide for all natural wants of body and mind; neither does He begrudge him the happiness he gets in supplying these wants. He knows that as to their benumbing effects on the soul, excess of indulgence and excess of asceticism greatly resemble each other. I am sure that this wise Master earnestly desires the regulated preponderance of the spirit, and smiles upon the ardent love which vanquishes self and gladly sacrifices things not necessary or obligatory, and I am sure He feels a peculiar satisfaction when the knife of excision cuts in a little beyond the line of things allowable.

2. The word *lust*, so frequently found in the Holy Scriptures, is the same as the word *list*, the primary sense of which is to lean, incline, ad-

vance, or stretch toward anything. When a ship is tipped over from an even keel, the sailors say she has a list to port or starboard. Lust is a moral list, an inclination towards things unlawful. The lusts of the flesh, then, are those inordinate desires for self-gratification which spring up in the mind, and seek satisfaction for the most part through the senses of the body.

3. The senses which were fashioned by a benevolent Deity have their legitimate uses. They are of inestimable value to us as organs of knowledge, as means of sustentation and defence, as conduits of lawful pleasure, and as handmaids to the life of the spirit; the suspension of any one of them is a calamity; but they must be confined within the limits of their appointed use. Here is man's responsibility. This makes his life a campaign; for in his moral nature there is a headstrong propensity to pervert to abnormal ends what were ordained for good ends only, a propensity to pass beyond the satisfactions of right use in order to wallow in those which attend (for a little while only!) inordinate use. We may select for illustration the physical organ of vision. The eye was made to see, but it must be controlled. We cannot avoid seeing what we see, but we can refuse to see what we do not wish or purpose to see. I cannot see the North Star if I turn my face to

the south. Sometimes what is visible is horrible, and we instinctively turn away from it. Sometimes what the eye beholds suggests thoughts that ought not to be thought, things that should be avoided, feelings that have no right to be harbored for a moment. "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red" (Proverbs xxiii. 31). See also St. Matthew v. 28. From these wrong uses we must train ourselves to turn away. We must live unto God with our eyes as well as with our hearts. To control the body we must control all its members, nor is there one more difficult to bring into subjection to Christ than the eye. If we do not spiritualize the senses, they will sensualize us.

4. Abstinence for the love we bear to God may be partial or entire. In things distinctly wrong, such as covetousness, impurity, slander, theft, sloth, etc., it must be entire, without concession or compromise. It takes spiritual vim and courage to unfasten the fingers of evil habits that hold us in their grasp, and to succumb to them is the soul's defeat. Abstinence is partial, though it may often wisely be made entire, in things lawful in themselves; and these are divisible into desirable and undesirable. The practice of abstinence in allowable things may take the shape of the surrender for a time or for all time of something which we may enjoy without offence

to God, or the substitution in its place of lawful things that are not to our taste. It is a custom to name special forms of abstinence to be put into effect during the Lenten season. Surrender is not uncommon. What shall be said of substitution?

5. Much wisdom is necessary and the counsel of the wiser should be sought. People who are "men of violence" in using every available help to religious growth need to realize the strength of self-deception which lurks within them, so entrenched in its lair as to defy almost every effort to expel it. Wisdom, much wisdom, is called for. One may think he is fighting when he is shirking. I may be very active in charities, but entirely passive in avoiding censorious conversation. I may be punctilious in services, and fond of forbidden thoughts and sullied imaginations. I have the wretched heritage of a sin that easily besets me, that one upon which conscience looks sentimentally and tries not to stigmatize, that sin which I am always intending to attack and never do. What is it? I know it as I know abstract propositions, but I do not know what it is, what the Wisest as well as the wiser think of it. I do not know what a snake it is, injecting its virus into my veins every day. May God open my eyes to see not so much that it is, as what it is; and when He gives this degree of wisdom, may He add

the courage needed to bring to bear on it all the opposing might of abstinence.

The "godly motions" named in the collect are the operations of Divine Love within us, whereby God teaches us what we are, reveals the beauty of holiness to which He calls us, and gives foretastes of the triumphs which await those who joyfully practise the rigors of self-denial.

THE TENTH DAY



OUR Lord spoke of the joy there is in heaven over every sinner who repents. How beautiful is this revelation of the close affinity which exists between the two worlds, of the interest with which heaven ponders the events that transpire on the earth, and of the relation between the spiritual development of the Church here and the happiness of the Church beyond the flood. As the cloud of witnesses bends closely over us at this time of repenting and turning away to God, we may think of our *misereres* that they are the inspiration of their *glorias*. We believe also that the rapture of their hearts reflects the inconceivable felicity of the Father's. What a vivid flash out of the infinite heights came to the prophet Zephaniah when he

said to Israel: "The Lord thy God is in the midst of thee, a Mighty One who will save; He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love; He will joy over thee with singing."

If penitence has power to inspire all heaven with song, it is very evident to me that there is not joy enough in my religious life, and it is little that I know about the "*dear feaste* of Lent." Well, am I to remain forever in the dust and smoke of the battle without pressing on to the bliss of victory? For there are many victories this side of the final triumph, and what grounds they furnish for gratitude and praise! Repentance, while it abases and bruises and tears asunder, will not withhold a healing balm when our sorrows merge into the tranquil joy of reconciliation and we exchange "a garland for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."

2. The pains of penitence are not in themselves more agreeable than other kinds of pain, but that is not a reason why we should recoil from them. The primary purpose of our adoption into God's family is that for the honor of His Name we shall gradually cease to be our natural selves, and advance to perfection of character. The essential fact in the life of every man is the Author of it, and our paramount duty is to work back

to Him until we become like Him as far as the creature can resemble His ineffable purity. "Be ye holy even as I am holy." To this are we called and to everything that contributes to it. There is a work of edification, and one of elimination. The former would be impossible without the latter, and the tearing down must precede the building up. The process of eliminating those features of character which hinder or stop growth, is necessarily attended by much labor and pain. Suffering is the lot of all men, whether they face towards God or away from Him, and sometimes it seems as if the most devoted are the most afflicted. But they have wisely chosen the way of the cross and their end will be peace. The difference between their sufferings and those of others lies in the way they take and bear them. It is one thing to rebel against troubles or submit to them under compulsion; it is quite another thing to welcome them as wisely permitted and utilized under the economy of Providence. For these disciplinary processes do not come by chance, but represent a divine mode of treatment, with the assured result that if he who suffers suffer in the spirit of a chastened child, discipline shall contribute to that beauty, nobility, and vigor of character which are prophetic of final perfection. Self-denial, confession, cross-bearing, mortification of the will,

and subjugation of pride by voluntary humiliations are neither attractive nor conducive to comfort; they are, on the contrary, almost revolting to the mind; but it is the testimony of those who practise them for the love of God and their own spiritual profit that these trials are blessed trials which, instead of spreading thick darkness over the skies do but furnish a background of cloud upon which the divine artist paints pictures of exquisite loveliness. The primary effect upon those who persevere in the way of the cross is substantial progress and incidentally happiness—happiness in the case of spiritual advancement lying not in freedom from trials and pains, but in the inward conditions created by acceptance of loving discipline. Thus base metal is transmuted into gold.

3. There is a common error which should be pointed out for the benefit of those who are disposed to use effort to gain nearer access to God. Many earnest Christians spare no pains to acquire the graces of faith, love, penitence, humility, steadfastness; but they do not put forth like diligence in seeking spiritual joy. Do they harbor the belief that this gift from above is bestowed only upon passive recipients, without coöperation? But that is certainly inconsistent with the command to rejoice. The fact is that they do not

comply with the command or use any exertion to do so. There are lions in the way, no doubt, but where is that ancient type of faith which "stopped the mouths of lions"? Not one is so savage that he cannot be overcome. The passions can be subdued, physical conditions can be neutralized, sloth can be vanquished, troubles can be transformed into helps and comforts. If the heart is not warm with the joy of a calm and unfaltering trust in God, the lions are unsubdued and the fight must continue until the soul has achieved power to obey the command.

But the joy of a soul that has learned to live in close relations with God is a supernatural grace and dissimilar as to its grounds to the ordinary happiness of man. It is not the product of outward conditions that are harmonious with our desires and is independent of things which antagonize and contradict us. It is a state of peaceful satisfaction infused into the soul as the result of habitual fellowship with Divine Persons. It manifests itself in the peace that crowns triumphant preference for the will of God in all things at all times, without consideration of exterior conditions, without doubt, fear, suspicion, or solicitude. Spiritual happiness in one word is the certain outcome of the acquired habit of looking away from ourselves towards God. The fascinating beauty

of a landscape is best appreciated when we forget ourselves in gazing upon it.

I think I begin to perceive what a harmony there is between repentance and joy. Of itself repentance crushes. The deaf-mute sign for repentance is a circular motion of the hand on the breast, suggesting the crushing and grinding of the heart as in a mill. Humiliation, shame, grief, and self-contempt are not pleasing experiences; nevertheless, the fruits of them are of such a character that unless there is a morbid influence at work in the soul, joy in God becomes their logical necessity. It is a false humility which fears to rejoice. Away with servile dread! Away with all the microscopic introspection and lugubrious lingering over forgiven sins which have darkened many a life with a cloud not from heaven. I must stop poring over my little stock of doubts and fears as if it were a moot point whether there is anything that is real and true, and whether the Eternal will verily keep His promises. What has become of my good sense? I will confess to the worst with a broken heart, and have done with it. With the pardoning love of God daily breaking upon me like the sun after a storm, I will honor God's mercy by rejoicing in it. He has a claim on me for joy; He is looking for my smiles of gratitude; He is happy in me; shall I not be

happy in Him? I will rejoice in the Lord and with Him and with all the company of heaven, for He has delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. O that I might be like that saint of whom the poet sings:

“Always his downcast eye
Was laughing silently,
As if he found some jubilee in thinking;
For his one thought was God,
In that one thought he abode,
Forever in that thought more deeply sinking.”

But I shall attain habitual joy in God only when I have advanced so far as to love God above all things, and forget myself while I am contemplating Him.

THE ELEVENTH DAY



IT IS worth while to notice the adjectives which are employed in Holy Scripture to portray the character of the Divine Being. They are very suggestive.

His love is "an everlasting love"; His grace is an "unspeakable gift"; His promises are "exceeding great and precious"; His judgment is "righteous judgment"; His will is "good and perfect"; He is "glorious in holiness"; His compassions are "unfailing." His mercy is "tender mercy"; His kindness is "loving kindness." These spiritual qualities endear to the heart that Saviour who was their perfect interpretation. The inspired writers with their pens as the mediæval painters with their brushes, labor as in

travail to express the glory, beauty, and grace of our Lord. How much more is He than their words and their colors depict! I want to make these qualities a stay and comfort during this Lententide. They assure me in an alluring way of the sympathetic love which our Lord feels for those whose strong wish it is to gain at any cost a deeper devotion to Him and who have begun to use every means to compass that end. I feel myself challenged to respond with implicit trust and deepened earnestness to the appeals of Him whose character is so beautifully described. It is by Him that we approach the Father, and through Him that the Father approaches us. In Him is all the fulness of the Divine nature. This divine-human Person is the perpetual centre and glory of our religion. No merely human greatness was ever so great as to survive its disappearance from the midst of men. The name may have lived, but only as a memory. Men may retain the mere name for generations, but they enjoy the fruits of the departed influence with an indirect or extinct appreciation of its personal source. The individual drops into oblivion; the blessings he inaugurated alone survive. Sometimes the originators of forces that brighten and beautify life, of ideas that elevate and ennoble, pass so wholly into oblivion that their very names are "writ in

water." But the religion of Jesus Christ is inseparable from His Person—He is it!—the very soul and body of it! The same ever-living Christ, the same self-perpetuating Lord and Master, the same tender Shepherd of Israel! In the sorest extremities of life it is not to a word or to a book or to a memory or to a tradition floating down from the past that the soul repairs, but to One who is more real than they. His personality overtops them all. He to whom the sorrowful flee, upon whose bosom repentance weeps itself to quietness, from whom weakness draws strength and cheer, is the very Christ whom St. John heard, whom he saw with his eyes, whom he looked upon, and his hands handled; it is the same living Word, unobscured by time, as freshly and mightily entering into human hearts now as then, no less cherished by uncounted millions than by the little band of eleven men who faithfully followed Him and saw heaven in His face. Nowhere else in the annals of mankind is there any greatness comparable with this.

2. Our holy religion is Christo-centric. All the agencies and instrumentalities of His kingdom, the very kingdom itself, with its subjects, are incorporated into His person. They are, after a mystic manner, potentially Christ Himself. The Church is His Body and only there are we

permitted to conceive of that organism against which the gates of hell are not to prevail. And what are the sacraments and the ministry but the vicarious hands by which the Christ works His wonders? He is the principal in every baptism and confirmation, every ordination and benediction. It is by Him we live and in Him we fall asleep. We are with Him when we depart, and in Him standeth our hope of eternal life. The glory of Christianity is its Author, and the more exalted our conceptions of His Person the more will we value and honor the agencies which He has chosen to employ. If they are depreciated He is dishonored.

THE TWELFTH DAY



S CHRIST is the glory of our holy religion, so the glory of Christ is the Cross. The Church bids us spend much time at its foot. We must get very close to the wonderful truth of *life by death*, and keep there. Even in our self-examinations we should look away to Him, continually remembering that His whole life was a sacrifice for us. The Cross began at the manger and continued to the tragic end on Calvary. He gave Himself living, He gave Himself dying, He gave Himself dead and buried, that in the mystery of a vicarious relation to apostate humanity He might make a straight path back to the Father. His reasonable soul was conscious of His mission as soon as It became conscious of Itself with a perfect clarity of

vision, with foresight of all that was to be involved, and without hesitation of will, being sustained throughout by His inherent Divine energy. Nothing daunted Him. It was the momentary eclipse of the Father's face only which wrung from His lips a murmur (which He instantly retracted); and this was permitted to the end that His human heart might learn the nature of our dreadful forfeiture. Well may we linger long at Calvary. No religious practice can take the place of meditation on the Passion if conducted by souls that are chiefly hungry for spiritual ends. We can approach God only by the way which He dedicated for us, a new and living way, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh.

2. He that was crucified comes very near to us who are trying to bear the pains and burdens of our present lot. The debilitating effects they inflict upon mind and body make known to us our need of help from One who has felt them and yet felt them not, who was crushed by them and yet was victorious over them. The sufferings of our Lord were human, but not merely human. He was the Son of Man—not the son of a man. There has existed but one such man as He, for He was conceived above and beyond nature's law of generation. No Adamic taint soiled His pure body and soul, making future sin possible, nor

could He contract any blemish from Mary highly favored. All which He took upon Him that is common to man—the physical pains, the mental capacity to feel the arrows of defamation and persecution and to suffer the penalty of the vile while meriting a nobler fate, the vanishings of manhood's strength, the bowing of the head in the exhaustion of death, the silent and solitary prison of the grave—were not His personal debt to nature, but were voluntarily taken upon Himself for the world's advantage. They acquired their virtue from the transcendent character of His Person. His human nature was without moral blemish, without liability to imperfection, without the possibility of dissonance with the voice of heaven, and therefore He was The Man without an equal or a counterpart among all the sons of men. Whether Lion of Judah or Lamb of God, Christ stretched on the Cross or seated on the throne, despised and rejected of men or coming in clouds to judge the world, He is of one substance with the Father, which no mere man has been or can be. Were I able to see in Him no good except my human good transfigured, He would not be the helper I am craving; but when I see in Him my humanity, unique in holiness and power because clothed with garments divine, I know whither to repair for sympathy, succour, and salvation. Hu-

man sympathy is sweet and it helps us to bear our burdens to know that loving hands will help but we tremble when we think of their limitations. Their eyes are not able to pierce to those depths within where our heaviest sorrows lie concealed, nor do their experiences qualify them to sympathize and take a share with us in many of the trials that are our lot. But the Lord who lived a human life and died a human death and whose human heart is alive for evermore, knows all and can do all. He feels a tender fellowship with us which no one else can feel. It is meet and right then that we should turn to the Crucified whose heart is as great as God's, to Him without disregard for the sustaining sweetness of other sympathies, to Him who is never absent, never preoccupied, never drawn away from one by the insistent calls of many. He possesses an inalienable right to the first place in my heart and mind. I will accustom myself more devotedly to look off to Him, for the great need of my life is the single eye, pure, unclouded, unswerving, radiant, which for every look at self shall give an hundred looks at the King in His beauty.

THE THIRTEENTH DAY



THE single eye is the eye called faith. It is the gift of God and develops under the training of the Holy Spirit from the first glimmerings until it is able to see the invisible things of God more distinctly and joyfully than the body's eye is to discern physical objects. The proposition may be unintelligible to those who *believe without love*, but it is the testimony of all those happy souls who have attained a mature faith that there is less room or reason for uncertainty in the operation of such a faith than in the science of natural things. It will be a good work done this Lent if I can loosen a bit the grasp which *faith without love* has gained upon my powers, and look to Christ as St. Peter and his children did: "On

whom, though ye see Him not, yet believing ye rejoice greatly with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Even devout faith will sometimes fall into the condemnation of St. Thomas and wish it might put its finger in the print of the nails. I question if any one of us, tried and tossed in stormy moments, has not felt tempted to cry—

"O for the touch of a vanished hand
And the sound of a voice that is still,"

and dreamed how beautiful this wearisome world would become if Jesus were here again and if we could travel far to His presence to look into His eyes and listen with entranced ear to His voice. With what illuminating power His light would shine on the pages of nature! The splendor of the skies would glow as never before, and every flower that blooms would catch a supernatural loveliness from His smile. The very darkness of the night would be as the day because of Him, and the north winds would come laden with the delicate odor of violets. Every blade of grass upon which His feet might press would rejoice, and the melancholy music of the surf would melt into *Jubilate Deo*. If only our Prince of Peace were to dwell among us again, radiating love into every breast, I think many hearts would quite dissolve with joy to see the crucified no longer bearing the cross but crowned and triumphant;

all nations, kindreds, and tongues drawn to Him, little children flocking to His presence with laughter, womanhood no longer anticipating manhood in His worship, and tottering age with trembling joy singing *Nunc Dimittis*. To have the world as it would be if Jesus were to come again, to have the world and Him, this would be heaven indeed.

Without doubt it would be as heaven to those whose spiritual development should be found to be congenial to its atmosphere, but if present faith is so fragile as to solicit the help of sensible signs would it be strong enough to accept the signs? Would it be staunch enough to hail Christ visibly enthroned on the earth, without distrust or recoil of doubt? Would the artificial stimulus of seeing give greater strength than the blessedness of believing without seeing? Nothing is final to a weak faith, no, not even sight. A weak faith makes no heroes. The divine plan is to transform our weakness into strength by the gradual development of faith whereby the best of teachers even the Lord and Giver of life, gentle as a dove, yet like the rushing of a mighty wind, trains us to see Him who is invisible. Our Lord said, "first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear."

It is a development working towards the harvest that is to be, when He putteth in the sickle.

Praised forever be this wonderful Christ who said :
 “Nevertheless I tell you the truth ; It is expedient
 for you that I go away : for if I go not away the
 Comforter will not come unto you ; but if I depart,
 I will send Him unto you.”

2. The blessed sacrament of the Altar is one
 of the means by which the Holy Spirit gives life
 and health to faith. It may be said to be the
 sacrament of compensation in that it makes up to
 the Church after a sacramental manner for that
 which it was not expedient she should always
 enjoy, namely, the presence of the Lord Jesus to
 the apprehension of the senses. It is this same
 Jesus who is at the right hand of God, as really
 here as there according to His most sure promise,
 and as visible to the acute and adoring eye of faith,
 which alone has power to penetrate the visibility
 of the outward veil and symbol, as these are to
 the eye of sense, or as He was to the Apostles on
 the awful night of His betrayal.

I am determined to make more of His presence
 in this sacrament than I have ever done, more as
 to the grace which is its fruit, and more as to
 the joy which is its reward. How solemn and
 centered should be my approach ! Divine gifts
 are too precious to be appraised in the language
 of human valuation but this thrice holy sacrament
 in which Christ is given “to be our spiritual food

and sustenance" is "so divine and comfortable a thing to them who receive it worthily" that it sums up and shadows forth all the wonders of God's infinite love for us. In it, dear Lord, Thou hast consecrated all Thy love, all Thy energy, and all Thy tender mercy, to the end that I may not come before the Father with empty hands or with worthless gifts nor go away without being filled with Thy grace and heavenly benediction. With what awe and softness of step should I who have received Thee beneath my roof minister to Thy glory and live according to Thy inspirations!

THE FOURTEENTH DAY



REFRESHED to the depths of my spirit, I return from the altar with songs of gratitude in my heart. How many prevailing Eucharists have been offered this morning—sacrifices savory with the merits of Him who died and rose again! He who died once for all and is alive for evermore has pleaded Himself on behalf of the whole sacramental host scattered abroad throughout the earth. Were it not for this influence unceasingly ascending from thousands of altars fragrant with sweet odors unto God, how different would the condition of the Church and world be. Who can estimate its efficacy with God in the vicissitudes of our probation and its reflex influence upon ourselves in the awful battle with sin in which we are en-

gaged? We would tremble to depreciate the good which our Lord wrought when He was visible here among men but we do depreciate it if, with our faces turned to the past, we think of Him as seated in a kind of passive majesty at the right hand of the Father, and fail to think of Him as extending it through the ages by His personal force, living, assiduous, persevering, patient, and positive of the end. Now, as of old, it is His meat and drink to do the Father's will. Still is He Head over all things to the Church which is His Body, still is He Priest, Altar, and Victim, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Ten thousand priests diligently engaged this morning, on every shore, in every clime, represent His exuberant activity and the unspent affluence of His high-priestly mediation. All prayers, all meditations, all spiritual virtues, all intercessions, all breathings of love, all plaintive cries of the weary, get strength to rise to the Father's ear because they ascend "through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Consider with what ardor and delight our Lord must give Himself to these activities! When He was about to suffer the ignominy of the cross, He said, "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" He is just as fervently desirous now as then to accom-

plish His work. It is Jesus Christ who is the most strenuous worker of the world, and He grows not weary. At every altar there is a visitation of Divine force and love not less ardent than on Calvary, though unaccompanied by pain and dereliction and death. His delights are with the sons of men.

2. Through erroneous teaching this uplifting truth is hidden from the eyes of many. To them the Eucharist is only a reminder of events long since passed, like the dress of an infant taken away by death or the gem which once sparkled on a bosom that lies under the "mossy marbles" now. Jesus is their absent High Priest. Their memory is fixed upon the Christ who died, and they do not bless themselves by thinking of Him as still alive and here, present in all the fulness of His theanthropic life. No wonder they fail to see in this sacrament a mystery to be adored, a fountain of grace, and a scene of spiritual fascination. On the other hand, the more impressive interpretation of our Lord's words of institution meets for the whole Church the longing desire of the Apostles to whom He gave the promise, "a little while and ye shall see Me." Just to the extent (that one loves Him will he love the secret of His Presence. Manifestations to the senses could not be more alluring than His unveilings to faith.

a state
being
God
+
man

Jesus
+
man

Without this objective reality, which is spiritually perceived in some sense like as we perceive the spirit of man within his physical body, religion fades into a philosophy, a sentiment, a reverie, or a reversion to nature.

3. Not without reason and necessity do the Faithful prepare themselves for the honor of approaching this Holy of Holies and engaging in acts of devotion corresponding with the privilege, but it is still more significant of the value of this sacrament in the economy of grace that its place as a mediating influence is recognized by Him to whose Divine Majesty it is offered. For He whom the Father heareth always, the one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, is in union with it. If, therefore, I would rise to a larger conception of the relation it has to the illimitable glories of the nature of God, I must consider that its power is proportioned to the merits of Christ, its value corresponds with the mutual love of the Father and the Son, and its scope includes all worship, thanksgiving, and propitiation pleaded before the throne. Such immeasurable value attaching to it in God's sight, the benefits procured unto us by the same must be innumerable. Like many of God's blessings given in the order of nature they fall as gently as the dew from heaven, and they are real, whole,

and perfect when they reach us. We do not contribute to their virtue; we have only to present receptive conditions and they enter into our hearts in all the fulness of their power to sanctify and save, to abide there and blossom and bear fruit there if in our humility we receive bestowed benefits not in vain.

THE FIFTEENTH DAY



THE proper effect of the solemnities and sacraments of religion is preëminently the moral one. "If any man among you," wrote St. James, "seem to be religious and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain." We cannot gather grapes from thistles. The fruit of the Spirit is righteous conduct. The man who has got so far astray from God as knowingly, wilfully, and habitually to commit any sin, has put himself out of the way of being saved from it, and if not saved from that sin, not from any, unless he repent and reform. Pertinacity in sin, without repentance, is an immoral condition, whether open or hidden. The difference between an open violator of moral law and the secret, well-behaved mutineer is the difference between cour-

age and cowardice. The criterion of spiritual vitality is its moral effect upon heart and conduct. It subdues selfishness, and is attracted to good works. It refrains from the sins which are common to men. It sets up a standard against those sins which are peculiar to the individual. It stimulates to the practice of "pure religion and undefiled," whereby a man can "keep himself unspotted from the world." It creates within him a desire for closer relations with God in the inner sanctuary of the soul and a quiet but vehement cultivation of those relations by love for God and by all that follows in love's train.

2. It is imperative to dwell often on the truth that emotional expression while legitimate and desirable in its proper place is not morally indispensable like the great virtues of the Christian character such as love, faith, humility, hope, joy, and peace. It is difficult to account for the persistency of the error that the feelings are a test of God's presence, that we grow only as we perceive growth, that the loss of comfort is the loss of love.

For the natural emotions are not inherently religious at all any more than the natural reason or will, though all of these are capable of being aroused by religious appeals. Other motives distinctly not religious also excite them to action, such as those derived from a pathetic play or

story or a draught of stimulating drink or the exuberance of youth. The natural emotions are of no greater necessity in one case than in another, though of a higher value when associated with devotion. In no instance do they contribute sustained strength, being themselves so fleeting.

Neither are the religious emotions indispensable. Faith, for example, is not necessarily an emotion at all. Emotion may or may not precede it, may or may not follow it, may or may not accompany it. It operates on the moral character before it comes within hailing distance of the emotional. The less the sensitive powers have to do with faith, the less danger there is that it will lose sight of its object. This is particularly true with the young and immature. In due time when progress has been made the emotions will involve less risk but they will neither constitute nor measure the progress, and even then they will justify severe scrutiny. For beyond doubt there is a danger. Byron's eye "in a fine frenzy rolling" was quick to discover the emotional element in religion but was blind to its moral requirements. With his pen he wrote hymns which his soul knew not how to sing. Genius could compose them but faith alone could use them.

3. As it is the property of faith to believe that which I do not see, so also is it to believe that which I do not feel. The reality of things believed does not rest upon the perception of the senses or emotions, of our physical, or metaphysical organs. They are not real because we perceive them but we perceive them because they are real. Faith exists in a state of independence and acts accordingly, its basis being the testimony of God. There is not an article of the Creed which I believe on the mere authority of sense or emotion. These have a relation to faith but it is a subsidiary relation. In the case of sacramental reception, grace is neither seen nor felt by the recipient, although it is unquestionably then and there bestowed. The process of sanctification is not arrested because it does not register itself on the consciousness. Faith, having put everything into God's dear hands, leaves them there. It looks not to itself, and if it did it would find no object. Faith is a looking away from self, a looking upward, a calm, detached, penetrating gaze upon its Divine Object. But should nature demand more than faith asks, the heaven-fixed order is infringed, confusion follows, and faith itself is in danger. Many good souls have been made wretched by insisting on sensible attestations, like St. Thomas after the resurrection of

our Lord. It is a sad fall towards the dust when we propose to corroborate God by our senses or emotions. As well might we ask Him to become visible to the eyes of the body.

4. I think many well-meaning souls are misled in this matter by the extravagance of biographers in describing the raptures and ecstasies of holy people. As though the saints were not men like the rest of us, and as though any man could be quite as perfect as the one who has his biography written! A French writer says "it is a common fault among hagiographers to represent the saints as strangers to suffering and to sin; by doing so they place them on a pedestal quite above and beyond the reach of human endeavor. Their heroes as painted by them go through the world crowned with the aureola of glory, rapt in one uninterrupted series of ecstasies; and seldom, if ever, descend to the level of our common everyday existence. A biography written on such lines is very beautiful, no doubt; but it is also very discouraging, for if holiness be such, how can *we* ever hope to climb its precipitous heights?" Or, if it do not discourage, it tempts others to aspire to what is for them unreal and impracticable.

5. The regulation of the emotions is desirable not because they are exotic in the Christian experience but because there is a general prone-

ness to accord them a place they were not intended to occupy. This danger is specially threatening among the young in years and the immature in faith, and they should be warned not to identify their emotions when excited by religious motives with the motions of the Spirit of God within them. When in the process of spiritual growth the period of equipoise and discrimination arrives, the feelings, while they lose none of their depth, are less turbulent. Exaggeration is succeeded by composure and a sober sense of happiness. There is no longer any need of caution against emotionalism, for the danger is past. The soul has learned the art of absolute self-surrender, having departed from all that pertains to nature and rests in God with implicit confidence that what is needed He will give and that when He chooses He will sweep with His fingers the strings of our hearts attuned to His praise.

6. There are cases where ecstatic experiences are vouchsafed, but they are infrequent and confined to those who have advanced far into the mystical depths of sanctity. They are neither to be despised nor coveted. They are easily counterfeited and if they are the product of natural causes, they will work harm to the incautious. If they are the product of infused grace, by their fruits ye shall know them. If God send them, their mission per-

tains to practical betterment in morals, to the faith which works by love, purifies the heart, and overcomes the world. This is the universal test. That is good which worketh abiding good and which has the concurrent testimony of widespread and long continued experience that it inclines the heart to shun the way of self-will and to keep the law.

THE SIXTEENTH DAY



IF RELIGIOUS fervor manifest itself in the faithful discharge of routines, the benefit of Lent will accrue to him who looks upon his duties as a business rather than an enthusiasm. These duties require a cool head, a steady eye, a ready hand and a good stock of common sense. Without hurry or anxiety, without whim or caprice, without ostentation, without counting the cost, I would look calmly at my life, at all that makes up that life of place and person, event, and relation, and then perceive that in or by these the will of God is shadowed forth in some manner and degree for my guidance. God stands behind everything and is in each moment of time that comes and goes. As He speaks to me by a thousand lips and lives; as day

unto day uttereth speech and night unto night showeth knowledge of Him; as not a sparrow falls to the ground without my Father, and not a hair of my head but is numbered by a heavenly enumerator, it follows that all things should turn towards Him as flowers towards the sun, and that as souls increase in their perception of His universal presence and indwelling they should be enamored more and more by it, until they acquire the habit of looking at all things in the light of it and God becomes All in All unto them.

2. In its earlier stages the Christian life is attended by all the conditions of a battle, and a battle it must be, for the spiritual enemy fights never so viciously as when he is resisted; and a long battle it must be, for it will be battle after battle; old issues have to be fought over again; the soul grows weary and sometimes yearns for peace at almost any price;—ah! how perilously near we then approach to defeat and misery. But God is pledged to see that persevering conflict shall bring its reward. No one who is doing honest duty to his soul will fail to discover that he is making progress, though the limited extent of it may be humiliating to one who through all the years in the processes of purgation has had proffered to him the help of an omnipotent God. To such an one there will come a greater equability of

spirit; self-control will gradually be not so much a self-crucifixion; and the soul will find itself able to bear injustice without a murmur, reproach without retaliation, praise without pride, desire without indulgence, calamity without complaint, and temptation without compliance. At least such will be the general tenor of his life, with perceptible progress notwithstanding periods of vacillation. The very declines and lapses which are inevitable will produce humiliation and lead to immediate repentance. No man's grief over sin is so poignant as that which tears asunder the heart of him who lives near to God.

This is a stage of advancement in which, although the warrior does not put off his armor (that he cannot do in this life!), the encounters of the "men of violence" have lost somewhat of former severity and there is in the breast of the enemy a diminution of confidence. What has been acquired of knowledge and self-control creates a desire (so intense in some breasts as to be spoken of as hunger and thirst) for more of the heavenly manna and deeper draughts from the fountain of life. The inner lesson which the Cross teaches has been learned—that it is a visible unveiling of the love of God never before so unreservedly disclosed, a love that did not refrain from the stupendous climax of self-sacrifice, commanding their

awe for the mystery of it, constraining them to consecrate themselves to a Nature so deep and tender, and kindling a resolve to live in the light of this love more and more, even to the limit of present possibilities.

God has been variously known to us as the God of economies and covenants, as the veiled deity of nature, as the author of all good, as the vitalizer of sacraments, as the dispenser of pardons, but now there arises a suspicion that we are lingering long on the borders of our opportunity and a conviction that there are scenes of spiritual beauty which will disclose themselves to the view of those who press forward to claim their interest in them. With this conviction a filial desire arises for nobler measures of devotion. We long to live more constantly under the immediate light of that Face which beams with a Father's love. We would know Him as He is in Himself—for "this is life eternal that they should know Thee, the only true God, and Him whom Thou didst send, even Jesus Christ." We have sought to honor Him by our work and labor of love, but we are conscious that there is a craving within which activities do not satisfy. Deeply as we may be interested in exterior duties, there are times when we suspect our motives to be sadly tinctured with pride and self-will, and we are inclined to turn from a serving

so deficient in love, feeling that it were better to break our cruse of alabaster and pour its fragrance on the Saviour's head.

3. But it is at this stage in the progress of the soul towards the higher levels of faith that the most violent temptations present themselves, temptations so severe as to account for most of the positive sloth, lukewarmness, and worldliness and negatively the absence of growth, which characterize the prevalent type of piety, for arrested development is certainly the mode. If, in spite of the soul's natural indisposition to spiritual activity, if, in spite of the strength of temperamental foibles of many years' duration, the bent of the will has been so far changed as to turn and welcome processes of purgation, thereby exchanging inertia for diligence and preferring to love where once it was indifferent, and to obey God where once it was servile to its own wishes, surely it ought not to be found wanting now when it is assailed by a more dangerous because more specious temptation, the temptation to *rest satisfied with its present spiritual attainments*. That there has been progress is happily not to be gainsaid; and it is a noble advance indeed, when life has taken the place of death, sight has succeeded to blindness, and hope to despair; and it is a good basis for rejoicing to have become consciously possessed of spiritual

sincerity and strength and growth, with added belief in all humbleness of mind that the Father is well pleased to see His grace not bestowed in vain. But there is a heaven-wide difference between a satisfying development of the reign of God in the soul and a spirit of self-congratulation because of what has been accomplished. The gain perceived is indeed encouraging, but it is only another milestone on the way. It is not final. The possibilities of growth are far from exhausted and the necessity of pressing forward is as great as ever. To be so content with what has been accomplished as to call a halt is to forfeit the grounds of satisfaction. A self-satisfied disciple who sits down to admire his acquirements must have arisen from his knees. To persevere, then, is a necessity. Not to go forward is to go back. We cannot safely rest in incompleteness. In what lurid colors is this shown in the frequent spiritual tragedies of souls that have *let go*—lost their hold on the eternal verities through settling down into contentment with what they had, but which now alas! they have lost.

My resolve is not to suffer myself to take a rest but to press onward. If he who determines to fight his way towards more light be tempted to stop short of final victory, let that man cultivate humility and good sense. What a field for calm res-

olution! What else in life is a satisfying object? How the Church has been vitalized and perpetuated by the men who counted all things loss for the excellency of that knowledge of Christ Jesus which they secured, while I am only hoping to secure it. It does not discourage me to contemplate their triumphs, for there is a difference between the prose of endeavor and the poetry of attainment. They triumphed while they toiled. The masters of the inner life, however great their joys, do not stop to speak of present possessions so much as of what they are pressing forward to obtain. They recognize the call to perfection. They have caught glimpses of Emmanuel's land, where

"Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood
Stand dressed in living green."

Earthly lights pale their ineffectual fires when the splendor of ultimate perfection is revealed to the eager soul. But they still stand in the midst of the earthly lights, although these have lost their glamour, and still many shadows remain. There is much for them to do in order to maintain single and strong their purpose to acquire that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect," said S. Paul, "but I press on if so be that I may apprehend that for which also I was apprehended by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I

count not myself yet to have apprehended, but one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

THE SEVENTEENTH DAY



HOSE who are observing a sincere Lent will deeply feel the need of perseverance because they have probably found themselves quite deficient in the heroic qualities which make the ideal Christian. They will not object to reiterated warnings. They are music to my ear.

A disposition to intermit the rigor of the conflict, to rest on the field of battle, in other words, to let the enemy name his own terms for a while, is senseless presumption. To talk of satisfaction is the drivel of folly. We pray, "give us this day our daily bread," and do we propose to practise this devil's fast of doing without it? Have we grown weary of the terms upon which our Father gives bread—that we shall toil for it by the sweat

of our souls? Have we impaired our appetite by partaking of forbidden viands? If the former, consider the alternative, "if any will not work, neither let him eat;" and if the latter, apply the principle of abstinence to things not lawful to be eaten. Weariness is the symptom of disease. A good fight is encouraging, invigorating, remunerative. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint."

2. We should cultivate a great contempt for spiritual pusillanimity. It is vile to seek new terms with God, to put in a plea for a lower standard than He has placed before us in the life of our Lord. I am positive that our Saviour with all His gentleness has a hearty contempt for a cowardly disciple. To the apostles who went to Gethsemane with Him and fell asleep while He, prostrate to the earth, endured untold agonies, He said, "What, could ye not watch with Me one hour?" He had asked them to watch with Him. He expressed His desire for the help of human sympathy, for, said He, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." To this affecting request their spirit was willing, but their flesh weak, and the flesh carried its point. It was just like our merciful Lord to condone their sin, but He gave

them no credit for courage, manliness or constancy; and they must have felt a very robust scorn of themselves.

3. Rare are the souls whom God alone sufficeth; and this in despite of the fact that if God's wishes were realized, the exception would be the rule and that all heaven is on the side of him who would make Him his all in all. May their number increase, and may I be found among them! When a man has reached the conviction that God holds a reasonable claim to primacy in his affections and proceeds to act upon it, there ought to be much dethroning of usurpers. He ought to put away from him everything that would oppose the King's triumphant recoronation. He has learned the supreme truth that there is no rest in anything but God. Even as a child seeks the bosom of its father, so He flees to Him and clings to His strong help. No one is so necessary and no one can compete with Him, no one has the power to bless which He has, no one can bless if He bless not, nor is any dear heart so willing, nor any hand so ready. What beauty is there so beautiful as His? "Many there be that say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us." Away from everything to God! Away from the attractions of art, literature, society, business, which fascinate so many and compel

their chief homage; away from the cares, burdens, and misfortunes that claim so much; leave all behind but your naked, empty, self-forgetting self; and bury yourself in God. Linger not to steal pleasure from the thoughts of your mind, the meditation of your heart, the emotion that swells your breast. Are you penitent? is your will conquered? is your love anchored to the throne? Dwell not on these or on anything you have, but press forward to other gifts, as though you had received none; and what have you that you did not receive? Away from everything! The "impellent breeze" that sweeps you to Him, gently yet mightily moving your will, is strong enough to overcome the temptation to furl sail, to counteract the subtle retarding power of the flesh, and to bear you onward, to the sea illimitable. O, yield to it!

In these acts of surrender and denudation the soul beholds God upon the throne exalted above all that may be loved and says, There is but one king, and He is mine! Only He is entitled to my supreme homage; only He can satisfy my eyes with "light inaccessible and full of glory." This does not justify Molinos' notion of the annihilation of the faculties, but rather compels their vigorous activity in the process of denudation. We need to argue the case with ourselves, to will ourselves away, to consign ourselves to a state of tran-

quill rest in our chief Good; indeed, I do not perceive how we can be truly passive to Him without being at the same time intensely active. Adoration is action, surrender is action, love is action, rest is action. God does not ask inaction: He only insists that as by active labor and conflict we have gained what we now know of Him, we press onward in knowledge by active preference for Him above all things, a preference which is His due and our bounden duty. He has not constituted us to be like vessels borne along on the bosom of the tide, but like mills which receive and utilize the power of streams.

4. What we need to learn, then, is not so much that God is or what He does as *what He is*, and love is our best instructor. "He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love." It is only when a glass is delicately focalized that objects become distinct which were otherwise invisible. Love is the soul's focal-point. It discloses the glory and beauty of the Infinite Spirit. It persuades the will to make its home and find its rule in Him. All the faculties collect themselves into one operation and are concentrated in a steadfast beholding of Him who is without limitations, without imperfections, without condition, measure or restriction; the Supreme Spirit, living and real, absolute in holiness, infallible in wisdom, all-em-

bracing in knowledge, consummate in power, unchangeable in counsel, amazing in goodness, ineffable in beauty and majesty, righteous in government, patient and merciful, benign and tender in love—all this, and by so much more as the infinite transcends the conceptions of a finite intelligence.

THE EIGHTEENTH DAY



WE ARE disinclined to attach responsibility to natural temperament or the kind of a man a man is. Our forefathers live in us. Their peculiarities are repeated in their descendants. Nature turned us out in such and such a shape and in that shape we think we must end our days. This would be a tenable position to assume if it covered the whole ground. It is true that we are not responsible for transmitted moral or mental qualities any more than for physical characteristics, so far as the fact of hereditary derivation is concerned, but we are entirely responsible for ourselves whatever we may be as soon as we learn to distinguish the moral quality of things; and sin enters when we prefer the evil to the good. The position is still less ten-

able when we consider that in religion it is precisely the proposed design of religion to make the natural man over into a new creature, to reconstruct him so totally that in the end all that is sinful shall be done away and of all that is awry, crotchety, abnormal in his character, it shall be said, "old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." In other words, the aim is to take the kind of a man a man is and make him over into another kind of a man—an aim not less than heroic when we consider the self-righteous way in which men look at their idiosyncrasies of temperament, as though under some imaginary law these were exempt from the contagion of sin and from the scope of law, whereas, in point of fact, the character of the conflict which a man who stands up for God against himself has to wage is distinctly indicated by his temperament. The nature and force of his besetting sin is indicated in the same way. Thorough-going repentance is not possible if one from conceit of his temperament condones its faults or takes pride in them as making up his individuality. Self-righteousness makes its last stand behind the breastwork of temperament. The Christian transformation is not practicable until this stronghold is taken and dismantled.

I must not be understood literally when I

speak of the doing away of nature. Grace does not work against nature but against its corruption; it neither destroys nor replaces, but transforms. The supernatural life is the crown and glory of the natural.

2. The operation of the Holy Spirit is revolutionary. The government of a usurper has to be overthrown and the auspicious rule of the Son of God established. This process of expulsion would be more marked if coöperation were less sluggish, but still results are apparent. As Hamlet said, "For use almost can change the stamp of nature, and either master the devil, or throw him out with wondrous potency." A person of a bilious temperament, with that by no means uncommon defect, a bad temper, by God's help in the means of grace and devoting himself to the task with determination, became noted among men for mildness, forbearance and charity. Did not impetuous Peter become a rocklike man? and Paul the accomplice of murders at the proto-martyrdom himself win the martyrs' crown? and John, surnamed "son of thunder" by our Lord Himself, become the disciple whom Jesus loved with special affection? There have been wildly enthusiastic natures that have contracted repose and equipoise. Who has not seen sluggishness metamorphosed into active zeal? Some need to be sobered, some to be aroused, some

to be tranquilized, some to be reassured, and all need the gift of self-regulation. Any decided advance in Christian character must require the knowledge and control of one's natural disposition, for the impeding forces within take their color from the color of the temperament. That which we need is indicated by our peculiarities. Rest assured that a lymphatic person, indisposed to exertion, needs to get energy into his tissues or he will fail of becoming a man having force enough to take the kingdom by violence; and on the other hand, a sanguine temperament may fail through overmuch self-confidence and underrating of difficulties. A person of nervous temperament has much to do in the way of self-repression before he can settle down into a solid love of preference, uniform peace of mind, and tranquil submission to Providence without impetuosity or flightiness. The suppression of peculiarities, by which we mean angularities, eccentricities, or other distinctive qualities, is as necessary as the extirpation of deadly sins. They share the common corruption, and enter into the common probation. All will be called into court by one judge. The only antidote is the Christian temperament—the same mind which was in Christ Jesus.

There are many dear children of God who are by nature subject to dejection and are sad in cir-

cumstances where others would be cheerful. They not only live in shadow but they cast a shadow on others. Their religious life partakes of nature's gloom, and they regard themselves (and do we not regard them?) as objects of sympathy rather than of blame. But they are greatly in fault, because they surrender when they should resist. They may have faith, but it is not a fighting faith, and it requires a fighting faith to be a soldier of Jesus Christ. It is simply a question of rising above the sorrowful temperament and the clouds that darken its skies and dwelling above them in Him who is the pure ethereal light of the world. Triumphant faith has its reward in a cheerful heart which is not disturbed by trials and buffetings. On the other hand, he who has by nature a merry heart, should distinguish it from the good cheer which is the fruit of mature faith. It is well to be able to look on the bright side and to have a flow of spirits which "loath'd melancholy" cannot restrain. I think the way to peace with God is shorter if it begin in sunshine. St. Paul was a born optimist, and when the Lord became his master in the school of holiness, how finely was his natural trait transfigured into a triumphant joy which no tribulation could repress. Joy was the apostle's favorite word.

Temperamental faults are greatly helped by

the prayer of the helpless. Prayer is the only resource left in this difficult undertaking. Then after prayer there is strength in the cultivation of the opposite virtues—melancholy can be met by cheerfulness, censoriousness by charity, petulance by patience, frivolity by sobriety, hardness by kindheartedness, duplicity by simplicity, tardiness by promptitude, insincerity by candor, etc. It is also unwise to undertake too much. Oppose one fault at a time. Concentrate prayer and vigilance on what seems to be the worst and let the others go for the present. This day I am going to keep watch of this specified sin, struggle against it, repent on the spot if I fail in the fight, renew the conflict, and, if I *do* succeed, practice the contrary virtue. Favorable results are certain to follow and gradually the pertinacious qualities for which perhaps heredity was too largely credited, will be overcome.

THE NINETEENTH DAY



THAT increase of spiritual character which even the coldest heart must at times desire is brought about by increase in the knowledge of God. It is the imperfectness of our knowledge, more plainly speaking, our ignorance, which is the cause of weariness and inconstancy. Increase is demanded by our best interests, for nothing is so compensative. If knowledge of God's works has its rewards much more the knowledge of God Himself. But there is a higher level than that of interest or utility, for knowing God will, if unhindered, grow to be an overmastering passion, a fascination which enchants and controls the whole being, obliterates what were once counted to be obstacles to growth, grinds to dust the old excuses and reduces all

other interests and rival affections into submission to one supreme thought, and that thought is God.

2. It is very impressive to consider further that the knowledge of God is inexhaustible. There is a bottom to attainable science in things created, but here we pass from knowledge to knowledge until knowledge loses itself in depths that are fathomless. This is strikingly illustrated by Ezekiel's vision of the holy waters, in which a man with a line in his hand went forth eastward a thousand cubits and caused the prophet to pass through the waters, which were to the ankles. Another thousand cubits eastward, and when the prophet passed through, the waters were to the knees. Another thousand, and they were to the loins. Another thousand still, "and it was a river that I could not pass through; for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed through." Much as we know of the nature of God, there is a sense in which He will always be to us "the unknown God." Indeed, we do not know Him at all until we realize that we can never know Him fully. He is infinitely beyond the noblest conceptions which the collective intelligence of holy men has ever formed. And while these inexhaustible fields of knowledge expand before us, I do not believe that the Christian has any right to rest in present conditions without stir and growth.

When I worship God I should worship Him in the heights and depths of His unknownness, and when I hail Him as my friend I should think how vastly more He is than that word signifies, and when I bathe my soul in the ocean of His love I should think how boundless it is beyond our horizon, and when I gaze upon His glory as manifested in the person of His Son, the Saviour of the world, I should feel that He dwells in "the light which no man can approach unto," and when I see His splendor as it is reflected by every mirror of sky and star, ocean, mountain and plain, flower and forest, I should exclaim with Job, "Lo! these are but the outskirts of His ways: and how small a whisper do we hear of Him! but the thunder of His power who can understand?" Yes, the knowledge of God is inexhaustible, and so shall it ever be. Think of the angels who hearken to the voice of His word, how from their creation they have been increasing in knowledge; and so shall it be with all who enter into bliss. Their knowledge will perpetually expand, because capacity increases with use, and yet the source of knowledge will never be less than infinite. There is much refreshment in the thought that even now as He reveals Himself more and more He increases our ability to apprehend more and more the glory, beauty, and blessedness of His nature.

O my God, I ask for more light and for better eyes to see it! Lord, increase my faith, and to this end increase my knowledge of Thee. To walk by sight is to creep on the earth. Deliver me from the aggressive insolence of the senses as organs of knowledge. From all that I know of Thee by faith I infer that what I do not know should also command my faith, my love, my trust, my adoration. Teach me to see Thee veiled or revealed in all things, for Thou art the glory of all glory, the beauty of all beauty, the light of all light; and Oh! teach me to live in correspondence with my knowledge. Thou art what Thou art! What I know, what I do not know, what I shall know, what I cannot know, are all mine, forever mine, nor do I shrink from the ways that are "past finding out" for if my finite feet can never walk in them, I know Him who does and He is my Father.

It is an uplifting thought that I am able to penetrate farther into the awful depths of Godhood by love than by knowledge. Knowledge must bow to the limits of the cognitive powers, but love is permitted to transcend those limits and ascend to personal communion with God. Knowledge stands upon the shore gazing out at the majesty and glory of the ocean, but love launches its barque and sails far out upon its infinite billows. O God who hast no duration in time and no di-

mension in space since these are but Thy creatures, who art without any limit of nature or quality, being the uncreated Essence, may I learn so truly to know and so entirely to love Thee as Thou art revealed, that I shall be allured to worship Thee as Thou art and shalt ever be unrevealable.

THE TWENTIETH DAY



FAITH is the soul's beholding of God. The increase of faith is by increase of knowledge. But this is spiritual knowledge. God does not certify Himself to mere mind or to mere sense. To the senses He is zero, to the mind a probability, but to the heart a demonstration. We see Him by faith, which is the visual organ of the soul; a seeing which grows into a habit of allied heart and mind. Of such He is always found. And thus reason's dry light feels the warmth of faith and finds in personal results arguments more cogent than cold logic could possibly supply.

God is the immutable center of a circle whose circumference varies according as men draw near or stand afar off. At one point it may approach

the center: at another it may be lost in immeasurable distance. The center is a sun of ineffable splendor. The saints in heaven have buried themselves in it. They freely merged their hearts in God and they do nothing out of God, while love constrains them to be always doing. They wait on God, but do not wait for Him, having learned that God's will is done by their doing it. Spontaneous service and the joy of it—this is heaven!

One would think that the glory which attracts them ought to fascinate us more than it does; but how compliant we are when conflicting objects demand attention, and how hastily do we pass out of the chancel-stillness of devotion into the tumults of life. Feeble indeed is our faith and superficial our conception of God if we can be so easily drawn away from our center.

2. To increase our knowledge and love of this wonderful being it is necessary to devote our powers to it without reserve or formality. Childlike-ness and simplicity should walk on either side of faith. "Ye shall seek and find Me when ye shall search for Me with your whole heart." I realize closer access to the personality of the Divine Majesty when I contemplate His glories with my heart. Love demands a personal object where the mind would be satisfied with an abstraction. And its object must be infinitely greater than itself.

It were as irrational as irreverent to think of God as a magnified man and of His love as simply a human affection "writ large." Such an attempt to lower the Divine to the level of the human would be wholly irreconcilable with the eternal purpose of God to lift man up to Himself, and would deprive the heart of that which alone can satisfy it—an infinite object upon which to lavish its affections.

3. Contemplating the nature of God, however, we should train our minds (it will not be without difficulty!) to think of what He is before we think of what He has done for us. We cannot fully appreciate the stream until we ascend to its fountain. In order to understand the incarnation it is necessary to apprehend the love which was its motive. Jesus would be the enigma of all time if we saw not in Him the glory of God-in-Himself. The divine attributes exist prior to their manifestations, and for this reason adoration should precede gratitude. Innumerable are the gifts of His providence and grace for which it becomes us to give Him high praise, but God's greatest gift is *Himself*. While He is closely related to the constitution and history of the universe, to the course of this world, to all existing institutions, and to the intellectual and moral life of mankind, He does not impart to them anything that pertains to

His Essence. In Himself He is unchangeably what He was when nothing was in existence save Himself.

Our thoughts of God are too closely blended with ourselves, our feelings, interests, and wishes—an error which is perilously liable to the charge of selfishness. We can detect it by observing the operation of the mind in prayer; how largely do our meditations and petitions have reference directly or indirectly to ourselves: how much more are we occupied with subjective conditions than with the contemplation of the boundless glories of the Divine Nature. The Giver is more than His gifts from every conceivable point of view, and more to be desired than what He does, even though this be life and benediction to us. To counteract this error we should for a time at least eliminate from our minds all thought of self, fly precipitately to Him and address ourselves solely and exclusively to the Lord God Almighty. Think of Him, adore and love Him just as He is and just as He would at this moment be had man never existed. Remand your self-consciousness to the background. Throw your perceptive and reflective faculties and your spiritual graces upward, away from earthly objects, and command them to sojourn for a time near the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. “We praise *Thee*, O God!” “What-

ever Thou art," said S. Anselm in his Proslogion (chap. xii.), "this Thou art by reason of nothing else outside of Thyself. Thou therefore art the life whereby Thou livest; and that wisdom whereby Thou art wise; and that very goodness whereby Thou art good both to the good and also to the evil." It follows that whatsoever He is, this He is by reason of no conception of Him which created mind forms and holds. By conception we mean that action of our faculties upon objects by which we acquire a notion as to their nature. These notions or opinions may accurately represent the objects, but they are not the objects. Our conception of God is not God, neither is He circumscribed by it. Therefore in thinking of Him we must pass beyond the limits of its authority and contemplate God as being in Himself far more than we know or ever can know. It would be impossible to know Him as He knows Himself, and therefore beyond our knowledge is His infinite incomprehensibility. But He is not incomprehensible to Himself, and this is the God whom we should contemplate, love, and worship—we being in a state of mental isolation from ourselves.

THE TWENTY-FIRST DAY



HE intense awe which the pious Jew felt toward God extended to His name. It was too sacred to be spoken. They called it "The Shuddering Name." Once a year the High Priest went into the Holy of Holies solemnly and pronounced it there. It was the name which God gave to Himself.

It helps me to think of Him, The Person, The Spirit, without naming Him, He is so much greater than any name. It helps me because no name can describe or define Him, nor any title or symbol delineate His glory, by reason of the fact, almost appalling to the mind, that the distance between created being and this Person, this supreme Spirit, is an infinite distance.

How irrational and how irreverent to imagine, O my God, that I could imprison Thee in the scant enclosure of my mind, for even Thy condescension in sending Thy Son in the likeness of sinful flesh did not affect to the extent of the gentlest touch the absoluteness of Thy Divine Nature. The non-finite came not within the limits of the finite, but rather took up the finite into unprecedented relation to itself for the world's gain. There was a union of two natures without confusion or composition, the Absolute giving nothing up, nor in anything being added to, while the finite did not lose its limitations. They remained distinct, each with its own will and operation. In the Christ dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, the Divine and the human being united in the mystery of one Person. He was God manifest, but of that which is incommunicable in the Divine He said, "No man hath seen God at any time; the Only-Begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him."

2. Yes, great is the Holy One; words cannot define Him, names do not describe Him, the tenderest gratitude and most reverent fear cannot adore Him as they ought. He is great beyond the purview of our reason. From the utmost approximation of our perceptive powers He sweeps on into the realms of the inconceivable. Even the pure

angels must respect the restriction which their created nature puts upon them and bow before the Light Inapproachable. Worship is the prostration of the creature before God as He has revealed Himself in part and as He still remains enclosed in His impenetrable glory. It is augmented by clear views of the disparity that exists between Him and His creature. Man is inconsiderable by comparison, whether in his primitive glory of innocence, or in his degenerate moral state, and he shall abide forever in the relative insignificance of the creature, even though he shall have recovered every lost element of character. We must contemplate God from the point of view of our humility, viewing Him only as we do the stars, by looking up; for He conceals Himself from the inspection of the proud, and chiefly, from the unloving intellect, when it assumes itself to be competent to fathom His depths and scale His heights.

3. The condescension of the Almighty invites the boldness of humility. Only out of the deep may man call upon the name of the Lord, but there he may be venturesome; and it shall be with him as it was with Moses when he went up alone into the mount of God and fasted amid thick darkness and thunderings and lightnings and earthquakes, the skin of whose face shone by reason of his speaking with God. The humble heart, bowed in wor-

ship and throbbing with love, reflects the image of God as a drop of water reflects the whole heaven. Humility only may come boldly to the throne of grace. Devoid of servility, it comes as a child to its parent, honoring God and in turn honored by Him, for he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

4. The awe with which a vivid apprehension of what God inspires the soul, will be the chief regulative principle of every life. This should be a worshipping world; but that were too much to expect as long as the Church is so deficient. There is much zeal and many societies and great doings and all would be glorious were we so habituated to awe as to stop at times and be silent before the Lord. The Church at work should be the Church on its knees. But the spirit of worship seems to have been displaced by an incivility and coarse freedom towards holy things which would not be tolerated in our social relations. Jehovah is looked upon as no more than a friendly comrade, and is often referred to in a flippant manner. The Sacred Name of our Lord is spoken as if He were such another as ourselves. I believe this defect of courtesy, to say nothing of reverence, has arisen from the extremely effusive manner of speech much indulged in with reference to the Son of God. It is by no means forbidden us to draw near

and address Him as our Saviour, but even grateful love should remember that it was not our sinful humanity which He assumed. That Holy Thing which was conceived of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mary was without spot or blemish. He was "holy, guileless, undefiled, separate from sinners," and He who was inflamed with a consuming zeal for fallen humanity was conscious of His superiority, as when He silenced His enemies with the challenge, "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" Even Channing, the exponent of the olden type of Unitarianism which had not yet shed its reverence, said of our Lord, "We must remember that He carried with Him a consciousness of His immense superiority to all around. He was not a man moving among equals. He remembered the glory He had left, and to which He was to return. The wisest and best around Him must have appeared like children." For our sakes He veiled His majesty for a time, but that period of obscurity was not permanent. The sun soon burst forth in noontide splendor. Deeply, passionately, as we may love Him, as reverently must we worship Him. That ineffable elevation of character, that mystical dignity of demeanor, that serene equipoise of soul, all tell us this Jesus I AM incarnate!

Thrice in the viiith chapter of S. John it is

recorded that our Lord applied the name Jehovah to Himself. At the xxivth verse He said, "except ye believe that I AM He, ye shall die in your sins." The word *he* is not found in the Greek text. At verse xxviiiith, "When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I AM He." Here also the word *he* is wanting in the original. Again, in the lviiiith verse, He said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I AM." Thus did He apply to Himself the Name which the Jews regarded as too sacred to be uttered. This Jesus whom men saw with their own eyes is in His invisible nature the I AM of ancient Israel. With what awe should we think and speak of Him, with what reverence approach Him!

"That the biography of Christ was never intended and is manifestly inadequate for the purpose of setting forth a character merely for criticism, admiration and imitation; that there is in this character itself a divine or non-human element, as much so as are the miracles among His actions, the personal claims amidst His teaching, and the resurrection in His life; that this element, both as a matter of fact and of right, calls for worship on our part, as well as, or, rather, than mere imitation; that it is far more difficult to believe in the possibility of a perfect character expressed in an ordinary man, than to believe in the histor-

ical personality of Jesus Christ; that the character is not separable from, and can only be explained by, or be possible to, His personality, and *vice versa*; and that thus the two are not distinct inlets to the Christian faith, the one prior in time, or in experience, to the other, but, as it were, folding doors, giving us a wide, easy, and simultaneous access thereunto."

THE TWENTY SECOND DAY



HE HAS no knowledge of God who does not worship Him. It is impossible to increase knowledge without increase of reverence. God is absolute beauty. Light, truth, love, wisdom, power, are not separable qualities which combined constitute His perfection. He is light, truth, love, wisdom, power, and perfection. The distinctions indicated by the Trinity do not imply composition because they do not impair essence. God is beauty. He is the only uncreate beauty; if other beauty exist it is by reflection from Him but not in its nature comparable to His. When a soul which has devoted itself to God and acquired the practice of abstraction from everything but God, converges all its faculties upon Him in meditation and prayer, it is over-

whelmed by the irresistible attraction of His person, the purity which His presence diffuses, and pours itself out in adoration. "One thing have I desired of the Lord, which I will require: even that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the fair beauty of the Lord, and to visit His temple." This solid preference for God as life's engaging end and purest aspiration, its present delight and eternal hope, is the definite attainment of those who in spite of all impediments within and without have fulfilled their vow, "Master, I will follow Thee!" To them, "faint yet pursuing," that preference, in triumphant control of their wills, is to them "more precious than rubies and none of the things thou canst desire are to be compared unto it." It seeks and finds God as absolute beauty in Himself, and it worships Him not first or chiefly for the favors He bestows, but because His inherent spiritual majesty overwhelms the soul and as by a divine coercion constrains it to fall down and adore. Recognizing the self-existent glory of the Divine Nature, the devout soul associates all other forms of beauty with their archetype, and thus faith waves its spiritualizing wand over art and nature; lovely human character is seen to mirror His moral perfectness; conscience reveals the purity of His laws; our veneration for men greatly wise and

good is a pale similitude of the awe His presence enkindles; the ideals which inspire the poet and the artist are shadowy hints of things not possible to be portrayed in all the fulness of their beauty. So in the natural world everything that elevates the mind directs it to something higher than itself. When the devout mind perceives "the wondrous thrilling harmonies of music, the sweet beauty of flowers, the branching woods, the repose of the mountains, the quietness of the valleys, the grandeur of the sea, the voices of birds, the balm of the summer air, the pure light of the stars, the radiance of the sun," it is still more deeply impressed with the presence of One who is more glorious than nature's splendor, more serene than nature's tranquility, more gladsome than nature's poems.

It is to be remembered, however, that symbolic suggestions are to be considered chiefly in their limitations. They do not, cannot satisfy the thirst of the soul for God-in-Himself. The imperfection of the image invites further ventures in the direction of the infinite reality. The soul may linger to admire the beauty of the effigy, but it hastens to prostrate itself before the enduring Substance.

2. Awe exercises an irresistible moulding influence on character. He who would shatter the power of sin, let him "stand in awe and sin not." As knowledge increases, love is more and more

saturated with wonder and praise. Nothing so sweetly develops a meek and lowly spirit. The measureless pre-eminence of His Majesty, a pre-eminence which paralyzes our powers of imagination, must convince even the least impressible mind of man's insignificance. Such an effect, as was just now said, is produced by contemplating His greatness as imaged in nature. Thus generations of men before and since David's day have exclaimed, "When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained; what is man that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him?" There are eyes too dull to perceive the suggestions of nature in all her countless harmonies of color and form, and minds too indifferent to understand that everything was made to exhibit the truth, goodness, and beauty of its creation; and doubtless there are few who are so delicately strung as to respond to the "unheard melodies," which beyond material partitions make all heaven vocal with praise; but no one can have felt the least spark of worship in his soul as he contemplated the glory and splendor and immensity of the worlds we see and has risen from these manifestations to the unutterable greatness of Him whom we cannot see, without finding his conceit rebuked and his proportion to creation and its

Creator rendered inconsiderable. In such a presence, finding that his self-importance evaporates as under the blaze of the sun, he must exclaim with Eliphaz, the friend of Job, "Behold, He putteth no trust in His servants: and His angels He chargeth with folly: how much more them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth."

THE TWENTY-THIRD DAY



HE devout worshipper perceives with amazement that He who inhabiteth eternity dwelleth also with the humble and contrite heart and looks with personal favor upon the sincere devotee, though least conspicuous among many brethren.

He is still more amazed to perceive no abatement of interest towards those who are not only without eminence in the scale of being, but are also aggressively at variance with divine law or indifferent to spiritual renewal or sluggish in the acquisition of holiness or content that a strain of self-love shall mingle with their purest thoughts. God's interest does not diminish and therefore their opportunity continues — a consideration which should incite them to surrender pride and

acquire humility (pride so hard to uproot and humility so hard to implant), and prostrate themselves at the feet of a patience so astonishing.

2. A cultivated spirit of awe is vital to growth of soul because it accentuates the sovereignty of God. It is the duty of the creature to render homage to the Creator, homage being the recognition of our subordinate relation. In external acts, in spirit and in truth, he avouches God to be his Lord and offers himself a living sacrifice to God. Sacrifice is the germ-idea of worship. That generous One who is the source of all good (Himself the chiefest) is entitled to receive back into His hands all that He has imparted to man to the end that by self-oblation man may testify his loyalty and show forth to the world what is the chief end of life. It has taken him years to down his rebellious will, but now at length it is a holocaust to God. He neither chooses nor desires to choose his way or lot. Whether service or suffering, he is ready for either, or both, or nothing, for little, or much, or none. This is a state of the will much more fixed and exalted than simple submission or passive assent; it is *an active preference* for whatsoever God may will as being the superlative of all possibilities. Such an exultant preference touches the affections to fervor and reveals excellence in every ordering of God, or it trusts when

clouds obscure the vision. Obedience and self-oblation are tributes paid by love—a love which sweetens every bitter cup and sheds peace over the stormiest billows. By its transmuting power evil things are changed into good, and every good thing into the best. Even wrongs inflicted by malice lose their lurid color and shade off into occasions of charity. Self-oblation deftly fits the will to its crosses, so that while pain does not cease to be pain, it is no longer able to cast a shadow on life; nay, rather, the sun which shines across the world lightens upon it and it rejoices in the smile of God.

3. It is through the awe of worship that holy souls participate in the joy of God and in that serene beatitude with which he surveys the world. For nothing that is or happens has power to overcloud the heaven of His bliss. His happiness is not by measure, although by His knowledge of vision (*scientia visionis*) He beholds the confederated evil of all worlds. The holy spirits near the throne are represented as ceasing not day or night to share His joy, and surely we ought to be getting like experience here and now in preparation for that state of being of which the joy of worship is a prominent feature and perhaps the most prominent, for how much more glorious even than now will be the revelations of His nature which God

shall vouchsafe and how much better shall we be qualified to appreciate them. It will be a blessed Lent indeed if we learn how better to mingle rejoicing with our disciplines.

4. There are some temperaments who can achieve the best results by a liberal use of external helps and others who practise much economy in that direction. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind, but let him base his liberty on love. Otherwise in his zeal for the husks he will forget the corn. "As spiritual life goes out forms come in," says the author of "Ten Great Religions." Then the converse of the proposition must be true—as spiritual life comes in, forms go out. But do they? Have spiritual men discarded methods of expressing themselves to God? Do "the saints" renounce the sacraments? Did the spirit of the Lord fade to a neutral tint when He was baptized, or when He instituted the Holy Supper? In place of "forms" write formalism and you have the truth. Formalism consists in not using the spirit in the use of means and is quite as common when forms are scant and bare as when they are elaborate. This shows that it is neither the maximum or the minimum which generates formalism; the blame must be laid at the door of that phariseeism which is skulking in the heart of most of us.

THE TWENTY-FOURTH DAY



WE IS becoming to those who are earnestly desirous to enlarge their knowledge of God, and to this end they should meditate habitually upon His love, not with the terror of a slave, not for the fear of death, not for reward's sake, but because they are drawn to it by the spell of its mysterious beauty. For God's love is glorious beyond our ideas of glory, strong beyond our ideas of strength, and enduring beyond our ideas of duration. Language is not competent to define an affection which is of the essence of His nature, for "God is love." Only God Himself fully understands those words. But what we know reveals Him as the benevolence of the universe, the infinite energy, not mere right but personal power, the reality of all

realities, as good in things minute as in the vast order and harmony of the worlds. I think of Him as by sheer force of benevolent will and without expenditure of Himself upholding all things and keeping in operation the intricate machinery of space and time. I think of Him as acting upon the cosmical system with infallible wisdom, pouring His energies forth in ceaseless tides of love. I think of Him as present and almost blended with that complex sequence of happenings called history, ruling and overruling all with reference to eternal issues. And everywhere it is His goodness which shines forth and attracts me to His presence. The vastness of an unsurveyed continent whose farthest expanses no man hath seen or can see does not prevent me from feeling that it is still my native land. It melts the heart to think how near we are to Him whom no words can define. We are pilgrims for this world only, and strangers only to its scenes; He is our fatherland, He is our home.

Nothing is more powerful to sanctify than the reverent contemplation of the love which God bears to man. It takes us out of ourselves, it neutralizes our relish for trivialities, it diminishes our dependence on created helps, it trains us to commit ourselves to the everlasting arms, it ushers us into an atmosphere of sympathy which soon

becomes one of congeniality, it imparts a heavenly flavor to prayer, and it teaches us what an ancient English saint called "that holy marvelling delight in God which is love."

3. Divine love has a correspondence in the human affections. But we dare not press the resemblance too closely, for human love is always imperfect, and often it is no more than a passion of selfishness, or vapid sentiment, or sensuous preference. For this reason, it were unjust to mould our conceptions of God's love after the model of individual affection. Whatever in me love may be, I am positive that it has not developed into a remote suggestion of God's. I should be plunged into despair if forced to conceive of His love for me on the analogy of mine for Him, not only because mine is itself so poor a thing, but because under the same roof with it dwell pride and other base passions. There is a certain correspondence, but it rests only on such aspects of human love as are most unsullied and spiritual. An ideal is a type or model of general excellence arrived at by a synthesis of the perfections of many individuals. Our conception of ideal love was suggested by no single character, but was contributed to, each one a little, by hosts of beautiful souls. It is only by idealizing human love in this way, eliminating all its imperfections, that

it is worthy to become an interpretation of God.

4. Love is immanent in Him and is the very principle of His existence. He loved when nothing was, except Himself; He created by an overflow of love; and were He not love to this hour, what would keep Him in touch with degenerate man? by what tie of affinity would He have made the great sacrifice? As His ubiquity fills all space, His love pervades His whole nature. Its prompting motive is to be found only in Himself. As affluently as the sun pours sunlight on the world, He lavishes good will on us. Love is the extension of His heart, He takes the initiative, He never ceases to love. "We love Him because He first loved us." And He loves those whom He cannot admire. He loves us *just as we are*, and what we are let repentance tell. When God made man He made him worthy of His love. To the glory of His name be it said that His love was not withdrawn when man became unworthy. In His love for those

"Who for so many benefits received

Turned recreant to God, ingrate and false,"

His goodness is poured out with an exuberance which is overwhelming to the imagination but peace to the penitent heart.

O, my soul, consider what He gives when He gives Himself to thee, to thee who hast such a

nature and such a record! The love that created has not withdrawn from thee in judicial exasperation: it has taken on a new beauty as the love that saves. Wonderful art thou, O Love, for not only dost Thou give Thyself to the unlovable, but Thou hast given Thyself *for* them!

5. That the motive of God's love for man is in Himself appears in its universality. Wide and radical differences exist among men, but all are objects of His love. For their creation was the fruit of it, nor did His nature change when their first estate was revolutionized by sin. The same source appears in the unchangeableness of His love. It suffers no abatement or intermission, it takes not its temper from the condition of its objects, and there is no evidence that it is terminable—"whom He loveth He loveth unto the end"—and this despite the vacillations of our love which so often descends from flames to sparks and from sparks to ashes. Unmoved, His wrath which is the frown of a wronged and unrequited love waits patiently the rekindling of the fire; and yet there are many souls buried in the ashes of an extinct love. Sooner a life of poverty and pain, sooner the loss of everything but a God to love than the loss of love for God. It is like the turning of a thumbscrew only to think of such a fate.

THE TWENTY-FIFTH DAY



HE love which originates in the depths of the divine nature is a wise and discriminating affection. It displays its power as much in what it does not do as in what it does. There is nothing in Him which corresponds with that excess of amiability (but dearth of real affection) which is called parental indulgence: consequently His justice and our highest interests are not separable. We may rest implicitly in a love which cannot misjudge us, will not be tolerant of that which would harm us, and will not withhold its faithful hand when present disciplines would purify the soul and fortify it against possible pains too violent to be endured. In the epistle to the Hebrews we read that wonderful roll-call of the soldiers of faith

from righteous Abel down, "of whom the world was not worthy." The long procession leads through tortures, bonds, imprisonment, but it is the march of an army of conquerors, for their's was a faith which joyfully coöperated with the purpose of God to make them perfect through suffering. It was not palatable medicine; indeed "no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous"; but there was that within them which buoyed them up above natural disinclination and gave them a foretaste of victory in the very thick of the fight. That which was within was planted there to the end that it might neutralize sense and self-will, overcome the fleshly mind, and justify the ways of God to man. Faith was that inner principle. It was the vindication of God and "the assurance of things hoped for."

2. The pains which men suffer are not in themselves agreeable. Pain is suffering whether of mind or body, whether by chastisement or penalty. It has no innate sacramental virtue. Any difference which may exist between forms of pain is found in the character of the persons suffering. Pain is penalty when the heart is unmelted before God: it is chastisement when there is penitence and the heart of a child. Everything depends upon the way we take pain. When icy hearts dissolve and yield to love, the pain that de-

stroyed becomes the pain that purifies. For this cause St. Paul said, "Let us rejoice in our tribulations." The history of the Church tells how this soaring triumph of faith has been exemplified in God's suffering children with almost the uniformity of natural law. His love shed abroad has neutralized the natural effects of affliction and inspired the will with a strong, solid, vehement, irrepressible faith which brushed aside all specious appearances and cast itself on Him even when clouds and darkness gathered round about Him. A striking example is mentioned in a recent volume (*My New Curate*) by an Irish clergyman. A young girl who had been the beauty of the village, was attacked by a disease which made her face frightful to look upon. It was one of those blights which strike you dumb. Some may have said, it is the curse of God; others, curse God and die. But the solid Christian truth was that the loss of facial beauty was not as if she had lost God; the disease had not touched her soul; it had impaired neither God's nor her friends' love for her; the mutilation of her features only antedated a little that of the grave; as our Saviour was Himself trained by suffering for the glory He now enjoys, it was her's to bear her cross bravely; "His visage was marred more than any man's," yet is He now the King in His beauty; it would be a

calamity more terrible had she turned a hard heart to God, as many a woman would have done. The result is best summed up in her own words: "But since Father Letheby told me that there is something behind it all that I don't understand, and that some day I will understand it and see it is all God's love and not His anger, I am quite resigned, and do be saying all day, 'Thy will be done.' . . . And the last day he was here he asked me, 'Now, Alice, tell me the plain truth. Are you glad this happened to you?' I hesitated for a moment, then I looked at the wounds of our Lord, and I said firmly, 'I am.' "

THE TWENTY-SIXTH DAY



HAT a reformation would be effected in the Church and what a revolution in the world, should all Christian people truly live to their Lord as the cardinal object of their love and preference! Every revelation of His will and nature shows that He mightily longs for such a changed condition. The Scriptures are eloquent of it, and His approaches to man of which they are a partial record testify to it. "Thou art good and doest good"—good essentially and good communicatively.

2. Yet He is not sovereign in His own world, for He is in age-long contention with a force of enormous power and persistence. Giving it names does not define it, but whatever and wher-

ever it is *it is against God*. As human free-will it rebels against His authority without reverence, without gratitude; as evil it is a mildew upon the universe; as satanic, it works out an infernal malice; in every sense the non-good claims supremacy over the good, and though not able to accomplish its revolutionary designs, it inflicts wide-spread woe and misery throughout the world. In every sense, moral and physical, there are misfortunes and disasters, earthquakes and pestilences, tears, sorrow, and death. How evil and its fruits can co-exist with Him in whose goodness all implicitly believe because they see goodness standing out everywhere in boldest relief, is the old problem, the theme of Job in the oldest of the sacred books, the puzzle of every thinking child. It is a problem not peculiar to religious thought or to the Christian system, and no one, be he theist or atheist, theologian or philosopher, can escape it, as no one has solved it. The presumption is strong that in this life it will remain insoluble by man. Attempts like that of Zoroaster, which predicated the existence of two opposing gods (Ormuzd the good and Ahriman the evil), lead to greater difficulties and afford no real relief. It is absurd and impossible to conceive two independent infinite beings existing side by side. But neither can we conceive God to be both Ormuzd and Ahriman. He is the All-Good.

3. How shall we conduct ourselves in the presence of this terrible contradiction?

First by considering that what is to the finite mind at present an unelucidated problem is not such to the Infinite Mind. God knows the origin of evil, its nature, its history, and its fate. He knows why it exists, why it continues to exist. Nothing can be hidden from omniscience. He knows, too, on what grounds it is consistent with His holiness, His rectitude, and His benevolence to permit it to retain its iron grasp on the world. As for man, he occupies a point of observation that is confessedly restricted. He cannot avoid the view which it affords, but he has no right to assume that God must see it only as it appears to him. This would be thoughtless presumption. What of the world we see is not the whole world. Only He sees the whole and only He understands how evil can exist in His dominions and why it exists.

4. Man's knowledge is limited by the limitations of his cognitive powers. He is far from being equipped to pass judgment on a system so immense as this universe. A thousand events of enormous importance had happened prior to his advent, and as many have since occurred of which he had no knowledge or only baffling glimpses. So, too, in regard to the future, he knows abso-

lutely nothing of it by experience, nor does his imperfect knowledge of the past furnish him more than uncertain presumptions in regard to the future. No one *knows* what a day may bring forth. We can theorize and imagine, but still the great problems are to us problems still. There is One who knows, and we know Him as our Father.

Knowledge is limited further by the evident fact that man is at present in a condition of pupilage, working slowly towards higher planes. Life is a kindergarten. It does not give all light, but trains for it. A common error is to demand all the light immediately. Only in the sphere of religion is such a demand heard. There are many insoluble problems in natural science. Things are discovered only in their phenomena, not their essence. At that point science is disposed to doff its arrogance and sit humbly at nature's feet. It does not lack courage to acknowledge its limitations. There is as much need of humility in spiritual science. The pride that would destroy everything because it cannot untangle all hard knots is not beautiful in God's eyes. He prefers that we refrain from things too high for us and make much of things revealed, which are sufficient to tax our best powers. Man must not be ambitious to become as God, knowing all things, but rather to do the things which He requires. Our

Lord has saved the proud intellect from itself by putting it lower in the scale of spiritual attainment than the moral nature. The religious spirit is best qualified to meet problems and to educate us for the future. When we are advanced to heavenly levels there will be a new order in which knowledge, no longer impeded by earthly conditions, shall expand to wondrous heights; when reason shall chime in harmony with eternal truth; and when present problems shall resolve themselves into light clear as the noon-day.

THE TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY



WHEN we endeavor to reach a correct measure of our powers as we apply them to the inscrutable problems of the world, we should also measure their moral deterioration. They have lost the balance of a sound judgment and do not act with impartiality when selfish interests are threatened. No worship is so clean and ardent that it has not an admixture of self-will, no humility untainted by pride, no reliance upon the Almighty without a strain of confidence in self.

2. The shadows which rest on nature do not, however, justify any doubt of the essential love of God for man. They do no more than indicate that seeming anomalies cannot yet be by us harmonized, and that neither our point of view, which

is limited, nor our powers, which are deteriorated, qualify us to sit in judgment on things not yet revealed.

3. Let us consider further that while darkness haunts the pathways of light there is more light than darkness in the world. Grave calamities are impressive and they affect the mind much more than the enormous aggregate of unobserved blessings. Weakly do we punctuate a long and delightful summer by remembrance of a tempest that came and went in an hour.

4. Then our judgment with regard to relative proportions are often biased by personal conditions. *Our* burdens are of all the most heavy, and Providence never appears so mysterious as when *we* are overwhelmed with losses or afflictions. When Hood was sick, he wrote :

“Farewell, life! my senses swim,
And the world is growing dim;
Thronging shadows cloud the light,
Like the advent of the night—
Colder, colder, colder still,
Upward steals a vapor chill;
Strong the earthly odor grows,—
I smell the mould above the rose!”

But the minor strain was dropped when he became convalescent :

“Welcome, life! the spirit strives,
Strength returns and hope revives;

Cloudy fears and shapes forlorn
 Fly like shadows at the morn,—
 O'er the earth there comes a bloom;
 Sunny light for sullen gloom,
 Warm perfume for vapor cold,—
 I smell the rose above the mould!"

5. However impenetrable the mystery of the origin of evil may be, it is by no means enigmatical in its results which include all the miseries of the dying and the dead world. On the other hand, reverence, worship, trust, love, obedience, and desire for union with God corroborate the persuasion that rectitude and benevolence have the upper hand in the universe. Good morals, spiritual development, and the presentiment of a golden age in which the triumphant skies shall pour down righteousness, are other results of this belief. And what is philanthropy, but a spark struck off from the ardors of divine benevolence?

That God is good is the natural presumption—the sufferings of the world have not shaken the world's faith in that. He was not made in the image of man that we should charge Him with the consequences of our own folly. But if the presumption were clouded with ambiguity, and if men's faith were staggered by the persistence of sin and sorrow, there would still be left to them the bright rising of the Sun of righteousness, who, if He does not throw light on all the secrets of

heaven, has made luminous a way of escape from the sins and sorrows of earth; if He has not exempted us from present pains, has extracted their sting, and caused them to contribute to the enrichment of our character. Nature's laws of retribution are transformed by His touch into loving austerities that are a preparation for heaven.

Do we need another incarnation to convince us that behind the mysteries, which are not mysteries to Him and may not be such to us hereafter, God sits in majesty and holiness on a throne as enduring as the days of heaven?

THE TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY



THE wonderful love of God for man should give us frequent pause in the strain and stress of living in order that we may test our appreciation of it. Is it not a strange thing that our response to such an amazing affection should require to be put to the proof? And yet, was it not poured upon us for years without recognition or requital?

“How Thou canst think so well of us,
Yet be the God Thou art,
Is darkness to my intellect,
But sunshine to my heart.”

In the moment when one fully realizes that he is the object of this amazing love, responsive affection springs up in the heart. He is far from thinking it a favor bestowed or a debt of grati-

tude; he loves spontaneously and because he cannot resist the impulse to reciprocate. The same heart that loves wife, husband, or child loves God with the same love, only by so much nobler as He is more worthy than the dearest earthly object. The attraction is almost compulsion.

2. Of course it is an imperfect love and will continue to be so until the old, hard, ingrained preference for self has been utterly vanquished.

It is at first a timorous love. In a sense God's love is too wonderful to be believed, but that is an excusable hyperbole and simply means that no language can describe, no gratitude repay it. But, whether it be an excess of pride or of humility I know not, there are many who will not rest in it boldly, and therefore go stumbling, trembling, doubting in unhappy paths, not having the courage of their love.

It is an intermitting love, whereas it should be a permanent condition like the circulation of the blood in the body, diffused throughout the whole soul, carrying with it spiritual life and activity. How rare are they who dare to say, "I will love Thee more when Thou hast given me more power of loving Thee, but never, never as Thou shouldst be loved"?

It is a fruitful love. It sanctifies all other affections. Only as we love Him can we truly

love man. The great love of His infinite heart, which is always beating so warmly, is not conditioned by the pleasing qualities of its objects. If it were, what would have happened to us? He loves those whom we shrink from loving and who shrink from loving us because of wrongs or blemishes, incongenialities or prejudices. This love for God is the fountain of all philanthropy, and it makes itself felt wherever human wants are to be relieved and human sorrow to be assuaged. It is the inspiration of all good works, all charities, all self-denials, all quiet heroisms of dying that others may live.

It is a conscious affection. In the honesty of its fervor, it can say, "Lord, Thou knowest all things: Thou knowest that I love Thee." The love is too strong, too fruitful, not to be recognized and confessed. The heart which says to itself, How dear is my husband, or my wife, or my child, will speak gently to itself of its conscious affection for God.

It will be a growing love. It sees new reasons and feels new attractions every day. God increases His unveilings, and there is no reason in Him why the heart should not be enlarged towards Him and become stronger to resist the bias of self-love, to deepen penitence, and to gild conscious love with constant joy, more and more as the years roll on.

God's love for man, reflecting itself in man's for Him, drives away the shadows of death. There was one who on her death-bed, when advised by her nurse to try to sleep, replied, "I cannot, I am in too great pain, and must pray." "And what are you saying to our Lord?" "Nothing, I am only loving Him!" Shortly before the end she said, "I do not wish to suffer less." Then she exclaimed, "Oh! I love Him. O my God . . . I . . . love . . . Thee!" These were her last words.

THE TWENTY-NINTH DAY



HEARTS that learn to love God learn by the same lessons to love men as God loves them, and that is in the sense of good will, desire for their well-being, disposition to do them good, indisposition to be severe with them, patience with their smallness and selfishness and, above all, mercifulness to them when they wrong us. To be as He is we have also to love those who hate us.

There is an endless variety of disposition among men. No two persons and no two leaves are exact counterparts. "One star differeth from another star in glory." For creation is not machine work. All are nevertheless required to be alike in mutual good will. Different dispositions, different temperaments, differences of knowledge,

fortune, position, character, experience, do not justify the withholding of love. It is just as hard to like people who *are* not like us, and perhaps *do* not like us, as, if we had the power, it would be with entire impartiality to make the sun rise on friend and foe or to send the rain alike on our favorites and our aversions. It is well that there are varieties of men, and herein is shown the wisdom of the divine handiwork, for by the noble use of these differences men acquire virtue and happiness, and thereby He who maketh them to be of one mind in a house is honored. No two strings of a harp are alike, but each has its own tone which, when in harmony with all other tones, contributes to the musical result. Therefore we must learn the art of kindness towards people who are not built as we are, and be happy in walking side by side with those whom we dwarf or who tower above us. We could not become as they are, we could not adopt their ways, neither need we to take offence because they will not adopt ours. Without surrendering individuality we must be subject one to another in love, and this can be only when we are truly subject to God and in harmony with His will, and little to say about our own.

2. It is characteristic of brotherly love to cover the multitude of sins so that they are as if

they were not. Which is practicable only by withholding unjust severity of judgment. There is an enormous problem in the hands of those who while under the obligations of charity are required by duty to form judgments concerning others and to act accordingly. Men upon whom this double obligation rests, and this includes nearly every one, need to distinguish between excess in the direction of hypercriticism and of faintheartedness. Only thus can they remain loyal to duty without being recreant to charity. Love also covers sins by excusing rather than accusing when righteousness permits. Its eyes are quick to detect extenuations and allow for them. It will defend another when he is judged censoriously. Love does not advertise the sins of others, but avoids detraction and character-dissection. It would be scarcely possible to hold human society together if love were not its conserving bond. Revenge would be the reigning passion, and "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" its rule of conduct.

But Christian love cannot be classified with that current pitiable sentimentalism which hides its effeminacy under the holy name of charity. This is amiability in a state of degeneracy, whereas the love which our religion inculcates is a strong, manly love, the most robust and force-

ful quality of which our nature is capable. Therefore in judging others it does not shrink from perceiving that moral differences exist. It throws its mantle over a multitude of sins, but notes that some are more flagrant than others and some men more contaminated than others. Like God it sees things as they are. It cannot be classed with the sentimentalism which "goes it blind," a poor, weak, flabby thing that has no proper place in the catalogue of virtues. In its feebleness it easily reacts into an extreme of prejudice and hate.

Christian love does not justify hatred for the same reason that God does not hate. There is nothing in God which corresponds with a man's aversion to other men, accompanied by the desire that evil may befall them. Mercy and righteousness meet in Him and kiss each other. When we speak of His wrath it is not the human passion of that name to which we refer, but an attribute of His nature as our sovereign and judge, pure, passionless, and engaging, tinctured through and through with love. If there are difficulties we may lay the blame at our own doors, for we have created them, not He; and they are not difficulties to the mind that accepts tuition from its heart. Want of love towards incongenial people, despicable natures, opponents, critics, stupid and double-minded, ungrateful, irascible, and foul-tongued

people is therefore inconsistent in those who trust and rest in God's love towards themselves and all men.

As love for God is more than awe-struck contemplation of His mysterious splendor, and as it creates in us a life of reverence and praise, consecration, and obedience, so love for others will issue in corresponding conduct. He who doubts himself, let him apply the test of doing some kindness. If it give him pleasure, although his hand may be concealed from view, let him dismiss his doubt.

THE THIRTIETH DAY



WITH increased perception of the amazing love of God the soul acquires larger knowledge of other attributes, for love is the glory of them all. Under its interpretation we abandon the conception of His power as mere force, and discover it to be pervaded with benevolence, His justice is clothed with the robe of charity, His majesty stoops to bless, His very infiniteness sparkles with good will, and the veiled workings of His providence shine with the radiance of blessings revealed. But this increased knowledge is immeasurably more than added information, for it touches every part of man's personality. It gives warmth to the heart and illumination to the understanding, and animates both with desire for still closer association with Him,

while closer association intensifies the desire. All the faculties of the soul are more and more centralized upon Him until His honor becomes the motive of life, preferably to personal interests. Enchanted by Him who is beyond measure good and beyond imagination glorious, the soul turns away from itself and aspires to God as its true and satisfying End. In its moments of communion with God—and they will be many—it not only turns from itself, but from everything, from all things and persons; from all that annoys or makes happy, from memories and prospects, from duties and relations, and converges all its powers upon God. Nothing sufficeth except Him, and the soul rises into the Infinite Silence and Awful Glory without a motive apart from Him, without a thought of gain, denuded of everything but awe and love. And only when it is in this state of denudation does it perceive clearly above the brightness of the sun that God is for and unto Himself in the unbeginning and unending, unconditioned and unclosed Divine Essence. He is all-sufficiently His Own Object; before time or space or number or quality or any other creature He was perfect love for Himself, and pure felicity in Himself.

2. An immediate result is the desire that all men may participate for the honor of God in this centralized devotion, and gain this uplifting

knowledge of His nature by which they shall be taught the significance of life. This desire makes self-sacrifice impossible, for it is not self-sacrifice to fulfil the end for which man was called into existence. Living or dying, we are appointed to show forth His glory. We cannot in any advanced sense know God unless we are voluntarily and gladsomely living unto one end, for in that standeth His purpose in making us; and in our fulfilment of that purpose standeth His pleasure in us and our enjoyment of Him forever. It ought not to be possible that any one who has caught a glimpse of this truth should turn away from it. May I avoid the fate which such madness deserves! And may I be pierced with consternation at the discovery which Lent has disclosed, that in my blindness I have been drifting in that direction!

3. This measure of devotion to God acquired only by those who intelligently and diligently seek it is a life, a sustained habitual life which may perhaps be best defined as a life of *prayer*. For prayer is the real atmosphere of such a life, being inclusively that supernatural operation of the heart in which it reciprocates the presence of God by awe, gratitude, affection, dependence, worship, and consecration, by quiet resting in Him, and, for our own and the world's welfare, by supplication for benefits spiritual and temporal through

Jesus Christ our Lord; but primarily as I have said, by rendering homage to the Most High in Himself, as attracting all that in our humility we can offer.

The desire of God for the homage and love of men is more ardent than the desire of the best of them for Him. "The Lord thy God," said Zephaniah, "is in the midst of thee, a mighty one who will save; He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love; He will joy over thee with singing." I love to think that thought over and over again. It is sweet as honey in my mouth. It seems to open wider the treasures of grace, and challenges me to embrace my opportunities. It rebukes my timidity and stimulates me to come to Him with reverent boldness. "For the Lord taketh pleasure in His people: He will beautify the meek with salvation."

4. But, to forestall the criticisms of the proud, let us distinguish between meekness and mean-spiritedness. The humblest man, truly humble, is not required to surrender his self-respect. The feeling of one's insignificance is an unavoidable result of perceiving God to be what He is. He is so great that men in close relations with Him cannot count themselves to be more than the dust of the balance in His sight. But *no man is insignificant to God*. Created by Him and capable of

being restored to His likeness, he is to Him unspeakably precious. Were we as valueless as we are sinful, and were He strict to take us at our own valuation, we might well sink into despair, and die forthwith; but we represent in His sight a value which can be expressed only in terms of the Incarnation: "Bright as the blood of Adam when the breath of God sent it sparkling through his veins, pure as the flesh of Eve, while standing yet in the mould of the Almighty hands, as they drew it from the side of the slumbering man, were the blood and the flesh which the Spirit of God formed into the glorious humanity that Mary gave to Jesus," and that, for love of the world, it might be sacrificed.

It has been said that Messiah is the measure of man. That measure was best represented at the tragedy of Calvary, and the love of the dying victim is the love of the living Lord. He loves the world. He loves His disciples who offer Him little response of love; that there is any response is evidence that His love is long-suffering. The aspiration for a closer walk with Him to which others give welcome is evidence of the valuation He puts upon them. But it is only the bare and empty soul which is precious in His sight, the soul stripped of pride's tinsel and pretty rags. He requires humility because humility is truth; it represents the facts of our condition. It convinces us

that we are neither a Gulliver among Lilliputians as men see us, nor paragons of holiness in the sight of God. The proper basis of self-respect is this, that unworthy though we be, we are His children and the objects of His gratuitous affection.

A condescension so amazing must melt the heart, and stimulate us to respond in grateful praise. It attracts the whole nature so powerfully that we must become absorbed in God. He has not learned to appreciate God, who conceives His throne-room to be, as it were, a free dispensary for our little ailments. "God," said Tauler, "has given all things that they may be ways *to Him*: He only will be The Goal; nothing else can be." Good God, with what selfishness do men enter Thy presence, as if Thy gifts were more profitable than Thyself! It were better to die with one's eyes gazing away unto Thee than to live with unlimited temporal good, and a heart bound up in itself. Were mine eyes stricken with blindness, I could still see Thee. If my tongue should cleave to the roof of my mouth, still could I speak to Thee. Should disease attack the citadel of my life, my outward man might perish but my inward man would be renewed day by day. If those who are dearest to me were all taken and I left alone upon the scene, my broken heart would still have Thee to give me sympathy and hope. For I am per-

sualed that nothing but my own folly could separate between Thy love and mine.

5. Without a conceivable exception all Christians are under obligation to acquire this intimacy of fellowship with their Father. Those who are content, or try to be, with half-heartedness, who take their cue from prevalent lukewarmness and distrust the reality of higher things, *live within easy reach* of the means of attainment. No one is more loudly called than they to the earnest life. No one is more able to acquire detachment and concentration than they. If others have learned, why may not they the art of drawing mind and heart away from everything, and fixing them on God in adoring love and praise? This is a duty and privilege practicable to the whole Church. There is not one of all the living millions who wear the sign of the Cross who has warrant from Above to satisfy his conscience with "a name to live." Merciless to themselves are they who linger in the barren lands where no waters be, and neglect to come "to Elim, where are twelve springs of water and threescore and ten palm trees."

THE THIRTY-FIRST DAY



PRAYER is a life. As we use it here, "prayer" is an inclusive term which represents a mode or state of spiritual health, a condition of matured faith characterized by abiding fellowship with God, humility, self-control, earnestness, and joy, and above all supreme love for Him. Prayer has passed out of the incidental into the indispensable, when maturity crowns the processes of purgation and illumination. Still more is it a life when these processes conduct the souls of the strong to the state of union with God. It is a life, and yet it is not their life. Their life if they have advanced thus far is "hid with Christ in God," and it is God who lives within them. This is not a dreamy mystery: it is the logical sequence of a

faith that works by love if it be permitted to work. It is the proper point of arrival of all who have begun the Christian career. A little honest journeying heavenward, the mind being absorbed in the journey, will bring the soul to the simple beholding of God as its life. "I live, yet no longer I; but Christ liveth in me."

To state the Christian life in a word, prayer is a life in God, or God's life in us; and yet how few of those who are presumed to be in the way of salvation show an ambition to scale these heights, and many there be who become timid and hesitating through fear of that still larger number who look upon those heights as a spiritual mirage. Possibly their vision is at fault. They may not perceive the rewards as distinctly as they do the outlays of strength, and the sacrifice of things dear which a life of prayer or union with God necessitates.

In the earlier stages of the Christian course, prayer is more rudimental. It is chiefly petitionary, an asking for blessings at stated intervals, usually restricted to prescribed forms, sincere and helpful no doubt, but liable to become mechanical. In its progress to ripeness prayer deepens and expands. It finally becomes continuous, "without ceasing." Beginning in the letter it ends in the spirit. It was for long only a hiding-place in

emergencies; but it comes to be a dwelling-place, and God is the abiding joy of the heart. At first it was easily overlooked if the inconstant mind suffered itself to be distracted by duties of less moment or pleasures less real, but, developed, it has become the soul's passion. Often in the immature years it was a cross that had to be taken up and was borne with shrinking and weariness; but now the soul if constant to itself mounts on sustaining wings, and dwells in the presence of its God. Prayer has become a life.

2. Those who have made advances in the life of prayer find peculiar help in being alone with God. As members of a vast community they have many family duties. Common prayer, in which the many publicly mingle their orisons, stands strong among helps to growth; for the sympathy of kindred souls ministers comfort and strength. But after all, the individual "retreat" is a necessity. Glorious are the solemnities of the temple, but every soul must possess its much-used closet (Revised Version, inner chamber), with its door fast shut against the whole world, where it can meet with its Father in secret. This is a human need, not an infirmity. We learn from the life of our Lord that He who taught us to say "Our Father" loved also to pray in lonely places. "And after He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into the

mountains to pray, and when even was come He was there alone." He who from love of kinship made common cause with a fallen world, was pleased to hide Himself under the shadow of the Almighty's wings. I am sure there is a welcome for me and for all there. He is just the same to each that He was to our elder brother. If I were the sole inhabitant of the earth He would say, "Son, thou art ever with Me, and all that I have is thine." This does not magnify me, but it does illustrate the generosity of the Father who "seeth in secret." He could not be more to me were I earth's solitary occupant. When I am alone in my chamber I am as really alone with Him as a hermit in some remote desert, or as the Lord Jesus on some silent mountain. There is no inconsistency between associated and individual prayer. The Church's open gates and the shaded silence of the oratory are compartments of one great temple. The voice of prayer reaches heaven whether it join the loud Amen, or whisper its devotion where no one but God is present. Since then each has its charm and each its utility, he prayeth best who, like a bird, uses both wings. Nevertheless, "solitude is the mother country of the strong." To them it is more than the place of duty, for they love it. It is endeared to them as the scene of conquest over self, and of sweet communion with

God, and of a thousand associations that link earth to heaven.

3. The practice of silence in the presence of Jehovah is very helpful. It is a confession that language cannot express all that the heart can feel. Tennyson says in "The Lover's Tale":

"Love lieth deep: Love dwells not in lip-depths,
Love wraps his wings on either side the heart,
Constraining it with kisses close and warm,
Absorbing all the incense of sweet thoughts,
So that they pass not to the shrine of sound."

Language is natural, but not necessary, to love. Expression is a contingent result. One who deeply loves God loves to pour out his heart in words, nor would he wish to dispense with the forms of devotion which are sanctified by centuries of use: the Lord's Prayer, the Te Deum, the Trisagion, the Gloria in Excelsis, and a thousand pearls of devotion inherited from the holy past; nor would he omit one word of the heaven-blest and soul-nurturing Divine Liturgy. But moments come when God reveals Himself with peculiar distinctness, so that His presence is felt almost as if it were tangible to the senses, and the heart dwells upon Him in wonder, love, and praise. Then silence is devotion. God bends over the soul and love is blended with love. These silent upliftings are not evanescent gusts

of feeling, but rather the ripe fruits of long communings.

This state of silent loving, so strong yet so serene, suggests thoughts of that still, rapturous love which dwells in the breasts of those favored ones whom God has admitted into that place of special manifestation of His glory, in which also the Christ of the resurrection and ascension dwells—which we call heaven. Their bodies with all their senses and organs are dust: *they* have entered into the consummate glory so long held in reserve for them. There is nothing to impair or impede their bliss. It is a serene world, a world made for spirits whose chief joy is to reflect the love which dwells in the still depths of God; and happy indeed is the earthly pilgrim to whom are given some fore-glimpses of that land he is seeking.

THE THIRTY-SECOND DAY



ONE who serves God humbly with reverential love, a truly religious man, honest, earnest, devout, loving his fellow-men, not yet perfect—no better than Elias, who was “of like passions with us”—but still habitually advancing, and believing like a child, will have learned that God is not only very near in the intimacies of the unitive state, but in the hearing and answering of supplications. He can say, as his Lord said at the grave of Lazarus, “Father, I thank Thee that Thou heardest me.” Such a man needing anything cries mightily unto the Lord. His whole heart and strength go into it. His asking is in a fervor of faith and expectation. He is not hampered by doubts and quibbles, after the manner of some. It is enough to know

that asking has the warrant of a divine command, which is welcome music to his soul, and that answering is God's habit according to promises which have never miscarried. That is the measure of knowledge which suffices for him. And so the plentitude of God pours itself out at the touch of a child. The simplicity of an uncritical, uncontroversial, unselfconscious faith has power in heaven. The entanglements of reason, the weakness of faith, and the scrupulosities of self-dissection, disappeared long since with those moods of unreality which fasten themselves on the negligent soul like tartar on the teeth, unperceived. When this child-man prays he enters the atmosphere of heaven, and breathes the same air with those multitudes whose intercessions break like the surge of billows at the foot of Jehovah's throne. His simple faith pours itself out without reserve or fear. He clasps the horns of the altar. He is sincerity itself; he cannot transmit his sense of reality to others, but it is none the less real to him. There is no danger from phantasies, for the child-heart is too near to the infinite reality to be deceived. It is beyond the horizon of doubt or indifference. It comes boldly and what it asks is already in sight, for this kind of asking by this kind of suppliant has power with God. It availeth much. Who dare

conjecture *how* much the world owes to the intercessions of the just?

2. Supplication is an imperative obligation. Some say it is unnecessary because God already knows our needs and in His goodness will provide for them. The plain difficulty with this position is that if carried into effect it is disobedience, for we are commanded to pray always. If petitionary prayer were unnecessary, is it presumable that God would enact an unnecessary law? Supplication is also a habit of the soul, a second nature. Fervency without continuance is a meteor that sparkles across the sky and then fades out of sight. It is as distinctly a Christian duty to pray without ceasing as to love and adore and obey without ceasing. "Men ought always to pray and not to faint," was the dictum of the Lord. When a person satisfies himself with saying a few routine prayers at stated times in the day, his conscience needs enlightenment. He would not be so content if prayer were to him a life of reverent intimacy with God, a delight as well as an obligation, a seeking good gifts from the King's treasure-house, a bearing up before the face of mercy of the wants of the millions, an opportunity to contribute the mite of one humble soul on behalf of the kingdom that is here and yet is to come.

3. Because prayer and its answer are like a

voice and its echo, the undoubting soul asks with expectation. He will see answers because he will look for them. It is answered prayer that has kept prayer alive in a doubting world. For if there did not exist a prevalent conviction based on observation that there is a connection between prayer and results, the practice would have been discontinued ages ago; but no religious practice is so universal. And let it be noticed that the instinct of prayer has not been shaken by the fact that, so far as our limited vision reaches, we are not always able to verify the answers, for we recognize the fact that the difficulty is in us who can see but a short way. Moreover, there are prayers which are not responded to according to their own literal terms, and this is particularly true of requests for temporal gifts or deliverances; but, on the other hand, many such (if true prayers) *are* answered, and the proportion of literal answers is so striking (if observed) that men do not lose faith in the practice, but continue to pray. Prayer, being the recognition of Power and Wisdom and Love Divine, is the natural language of a meek and docile spirit. It is a shame that, while men obey the instinct of prayer, they are so sluggish in their expectation of results. There are as many wise answers as there are true prayers, and the more observant they are the more shall they see, and the more they see the more im-

portunate will they be. It was a characteristic of the Venerable Bede that he was always thanking God, and this habit was due, as in his case so in that of all the singing saints, to his appreciation of God as the Answerer of prayer.

THE THIRTY-THIRD DAY



HY should God prescribe and commend the life of prayer did He not intend to honor it with His blessing? And yet, as was said, how common it is to pray for specific things without expectation. Is this honest? Is it not one reason why it is so easy to take a census of the men who really *believe*? The child-hearted man expects the answer without hesitation, and at the same time submits himself to the wisdom of the Only Wise. He is far from assuming that what he desires shall overrule what is best in the eyes of omniscient Goodness, and is thankful that there is One who exercises revisory powers over his ignorance in asking. Then as to the time, he is far from dictating dates, nor does he lose patience because he may have to

wait. Who knows the opportune moment so well as God?

2. It is necessary to dwell a little on this dubious mood which holds many back from expectation, and obstructs their spiritual advancement.

Why is it so hindering? Because in effect it disputes the ways of God in prayer, and a critical doubt of Him takes vigor out of faith, which is the principle of holiness. But may it not be alleged that there are grounds for reasonable doubt when prayer appears to fall short of an answer? Undoubtedly if the appearance correspond to the reality; but such a correspondence does not exist. There is no reason to question God's good faith, and every reason to attribute the appearance of failure to the character of the suppliant or of the prayer itself. Imperfection is the mark of man, and since we do so many things that are amiss, we are quite liable to ask amiss. Wrong asking is the difficulty, and the wrong-doer is the source of it.

We ask amiss when we are not in a state of reconciliation; for as prayer implies faith, and alienation from God lack or loss of faith, it follows that prayer without faith only seems to be prayer. God gives much without the asking, but nothing to outward appearance. Prayer must be the utterance of a penitent, surrendered, loving heart,

whose motive when it asks is the honor of God, and the manner of the asking must be simple and child-like.

We also ask amiss when we fail to comply with the requirements of coöperation, by which we are bound to do all that we can to further the end desired. How absurd to pray for energy and continue to be indolent, for love without loving, for victory over some sin without attacking it, for daily bread without toil!

Selfish prayers confined to home necessities have no heaven-piercing power. He who prays should remember that his case is only one of millions. The world is full of men with the same desires, the same needs, the same conflicts, the same destiny; and the humble prayer of one will cover the needs of all. Why not place himself in the midst of this multitude and identify their wants with his own? In some cases prayer is of necessity entirely individual. Thus one cannot repent or adore for others, nor serve as their proxy in acts of love, but he still has left to him whole worlds of things to ask for. It is enough to say, What I ask for myself I ask for all needy souls. It is a pious practice thus to *catholicize* our prayers, even as our Lord on the cross did when those outstretched arms took the whole world in their embrace.

Then there is further an obligation of reciprocity. How many of God's praying children are supplicating Him on behalf of the holy Church throughout the world! How many priests are this morning offering the Holy Sacrifice for all! We do not know them and few of them know us; we may never meet them face to face in this world, but that signifies nothing if they, people and priests, are praying for us; and so let us pray for them. It may be a bit difficult to pray for Dr. Fell, but it will be a good prayer if the difficulty is overcome. It taxes the bitter theological partisan to pour out on his foe "the precious oil," and "the dew of Hermon." More against the grain is it to pray lovingly for those who have wronged or injured us, or for those whom we have wronged or injured. May God help me to rise to the pure ether of unselfish praying!

3. Asking amiss then is the only reasonable ground for doubt in regard to answers, and certainly this involves ourselves rather than the integrity of the Almighty.

There are three questions pertinent to the subject which I may put to myself. First, how many of my prayers have been answered within my knowledge? No observing person can deny that they have been numerous, and sometimes so conspicuous as to excite wonder, love and praise. Sec-

ond, can I assert that because I have not *known* them to be answered, any of my prayers have remained unanswered? This would be to claim omniscience. It would be better to apply to myself the language of prophecy, "And I will bring the blind by a way that they know not; in paths that they know not will I lead them." Perhaps our unrecognized blessings outnumber those of which we are conscious. The gifts of God are without measure, as befits His generosity. Of His answers we may say, "how great is the sum of them!" If, then, many of my prayers have to my knowledge been answered, and if many have been answered without my knowledge, how am I going about to show that any prayer which I have offered under right conditions has been unanswered in time and manner as the Divine Wisdom ordained? It is beyond my power to show it. The presumptions are against it. The testimony sustains the affirmation that true prayer is always answered, as uniformly though not as mechanically as natural law effects its results. The conjunction of prayer with its answer is ordained of God; consequently, there is no excuse for wavering and every reason for expectation.

The general conclusion reached by those in all ages who have practised prayer is that it is always answered, if it *be* prayer, whether petition-

ary, eucharistic, mental, oral, or contemplative. Some are answered according to the letter. It was the prayer of our Lord that "the Spirit of truth" might come to the Church. The literal answer is recorded in the book of Acts. Some are answered by substitution. S. Paul asked that his "thorn in the flesh" might depart from him, but in place of driving it away, He took the wiser way of giving him grace to bear it, and the bearing of it was the greater blessing. Some are answered by denial for imperative reasons; and how strange that this should have been illustrated by the passionate appeal of the Son of man in Gethsemane. It was not possible that the cup should pass from Him; it must needs be that He drink it; for this very cause He was about to die that He might taste death for every man. Therefore the Son of God put His arms around His recoiling humanity, and thenceforth the Son of man was strong to drink the cup to its dregs. Some are answered abundantly, "above all that we can ask or think." When Solomon asked for an understanding heart as the judge of his people, God added, "that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honor, so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days." It was the prodigal son of the parable who asked a low place among his father's servants, but received a festal welcome and the best

the father had to bestow. Some petitions are answered after intervening delay. The times are in God's hands. The Old Testament heroes died, "not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them and embraced them." Their faith stumbled not at postponement even in the very shadows of death, but maintained holy expectation as they passed into the land of eternal fulfilment. It seemed like a vain thing that the first martyr, Stephen, should in the agony of his death kneel down and with a loud voice pray, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge!" but in God's time the answer came and Saul the persecutor became the great apostle. "If Stephen had not prayed, the Church would not have had Paul." Some petitions are answered immediately. A striking instance was that of Daniel, who was answered while he was yet speaking. "At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment went forth and I am come to tell thee, for thou art greatly beloved." The prayer of the penitent thief had immediate answer—"To-day thou shalt be with Me in paradise." Always all real prayer is honored and answered according to the wisdom and benevolence of God.

THE THIRTY-FOURTH DAY



THE life of prayer includes (1) the prayer of petition or supplication for things needed ; (2) the prayer of meditation or the exercise of devout reflection, so that the throne of grace becomes a school in theology ; and (3) the prayer of adoring communion. In meditation the mental powers touched by love exercise themselves upon divine themes, drawing much nutrition from them ; but communion calls out the silent contemplation of the heart. This is an exclusive beholding of the being and glory of God in which the heart is transferred from the multiplicity of objects to the ONE. The devotee forgets himself, forgets all the routines of duty, forgets material things, insulates himself from everything, and buries his heart in the Di-

vine Love which is the "excellent glory" of God's nature, contemplating it with silent, motionless affection and awe.

2. This holy intimacy is the fruitage of long and resolute devotion to God in Himself as the chief end of all being. It involves much steadfast preparation.

First, there must be perfect personal surrender at the outstart, and habitual forever after. Surrender is that deliberate exercise of the will by which it transfers itself to and merges itself in God, placing the entire being in His hands without reservation for all time and for eternity. The will does not vacate its natural place, but it repudiates and abandons its right of choice for lack of confidence in itself, and thus sinks into unison with the wishes of God, who alone is governed by foresight, wisdom and rectitude. The *ego* remains: it is egotism which departs. This surrender is not alone by intention or sentiment, but by wholeness of action, by actual and final transference, as when one makes over to another by deed all his right, title, interest, and claim to a piece of real estate. The essential feature of the act is its completeness. Surrender is spontaneous and sympathetic. It accepts the will of God, all that He wills us to be, to do and to suffer, wherever and whenever that will is made known, and accepts it

by preference, since nothing else of all the countless possibilities can be so desirable or profitable as that which eternal Wisdom orders. Preference asks no questions of the will of God. This is the root-principle of the life of prayer.

And surrender repeats itself until it becomes custom.

This is not to be accomplished without many campaigns, for the will does not love to give up its independence, and it has a sad facility of reversion to itself. It is only by perseverance in self-conquest that the climax of triumph is reached when the will calmly announces, I am dead, subjugated, surrendered, transported into the wisdom, power and love of God! In all these campaigns it puts forth voluntary self-renunciation in the warmth of love, rather than by the mere force of volition. A will to obey is sometimes only the enforced homage of the slave of conscience, but the act is transfigured when the light of love shines upon it as the sun. Then obedience becomes the homage of the child.

How impressively does the natural world teach the lesson of doing the will of its Creator! For how faithfully everything that exists, from the stars to the firefly, from the oceans to the fog-atom, moves on its appointed path, "fire and hail, snow and vapors, stormy wind, fulfilling His word."

In the vast universe not a note of contradiction is heard. As if by concerted agreement, all nature bows in the direction of the supreme will, without variableness or shadow of turning, through the ages. Every object seems to say, This is the path He has pointed out; there is no other way. What an astonishing concordance! What homage to the eternal designs! May I learn from nature to live in constant harmony with, and offer myself up to, the wise and holy will of God!

Second, with surrender there must be isolation, which may be mental or physical. Physical isolation is literal solitude, or retiracy as far as possible from the world of sense-perception, a duty which our Lord taught by precept and example. If our lukewarm Christians loved the "inner chamber" more, they would not find it so difficult to prefer God's will to their own, and their church-going would cease to be a concession to custom. Get your own private place of prayer, and see if you cannot then shut your eyes and make a little chapel in your breast. Mental isolation is the unfastening of the thoughts from everything except God. This includes more than the intellectual faculties, it includes the totality of the immaterial man. "Leave God for God" was a saying of Dr. Pusey; that is, when we become for a little moment interested in anything else, make speed to get back

to God. It happens not infrequently through the weakness of our nature that the mind rests complacently in its own operations, and thus devotion becomes a broken cistern that can hold no water. If we are in meditation, we should remember that the end is not thoughts about God, but God Himself. There is danger when one thinks for the sake of thinking, or admires the beauty of his thoughts, or thinks how pleasing his thoughts must be to God. This is not isolation at all, but self-worship. While physical isolation is sterile of result by itself, the soul can draw apart without the former. I believe the possessor of the "hidden man of the heart" can worship God in spirit and in truth in the world's noisy centres and, perhaps, more than some suspect, the "outward adorning" of society may have behind it "the incorruptible apparel of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." But, be that as it may, nothing should be permitted to intrude into the heart's sanctuary. Everything that is of the earth must retire when the Holy One enters. The only light is that which shines from Above.

Third, there must be inward serenity. The vexations, distractions and illusions of life must cease to disturb. A surrendered will is necessarily a serene will. Close relations with God resemble that part of a steam-engine which is called the

governor; it equalizes the strokes of the piston, prevents impetuosity of action, and reduces every wheel to a harmony of motion. The soul which knows no will but God's and rests quietly in Him, will surely acquire something of His ineffable serenity; it will avoid flights and impulses and will move modestly forward on the pathway of holy peace; it will be moderated in all things, neither unduly uplifted by happiness nor depressed by trouble. And this acquired equipoise of spirit will increase, the soul learning more and more how to practise surrender, until it becomes a rule and habit to put the will of God before personal desire or preference. There is less and less protest as the years go by, and when at length the soul has won for itself the blessing of a life of prayer, there will be exceeding peace within. This is the recompense of those who press toward the mark until they feel themselves to be at home in the tranquillity of God.

Whatever may be present deficiencies, we know from the history of the Church that men have been so fused as to their wills into the will of God that they became almost indifferent to everything that was not associated with, or did not lead to, God. It mattered little to them whether they lived or died. Life meant nothing to them except as it touched God, and death meant less than nothing,

for they could not really die. They were stript to the bone, with nothing to offer but simple being and pure loving, and for this reason deep was their oneness with God. It is the empty chalice into which He delights to pour His wine. Outward pleasures had no power to please them unless associated with Him. The disquietude of this world could not annoy those who made their home within the confines of the eternal tranquillity. The flow of their life was not despoiled of its peace by storms. Their imperfect love found its home in the love that is perfect, as a confluent brook flows into the still ocean, and great was their peace.

But the perfect peace is not yet. Much conflict awaits, and sorely will the surrendered heart be tried. Thus, to cite an example, the holiest seasons of prayer will be assailed by involuntary distractions and roving thoughts, which is all the more a trial and grief because it is so difficult for the conscience to recognize the non-concurrence of the will. Many a more serious trial than this has given less anxiety to men of prayer. They do not consider that distractions occur whatever may occupy the mind, as reading or writing, and are as unavoidable as the roll of distant thunder. If there is any fault it lies at the door of him who is easily diverted from holy duties, particularly if distractions cause him little displeasure, for this

shows them to be not entirely involuntary. If they do excite repugnance, this is evidence that the heart is with God, however rambling the mind may be. An hour spent in resisting them, some one has said, is more pleasing to God than an hour of rapture. But whether these trials are misfortunes or faults, one thing remains to do: cast them down at the feet of the Father, and ask Him to have regard to our *intention* and deal gently with our roving minds.

THE THIRTY-FIFTH DAY



THE solemn season has sped too quickly by and now Holy Week, the week of darkness and death, has begun. Yesterday a multitude followed Him from Bethany, whither they had gone to see Him and Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead, and a larger multitude poured out at the city's gate to meet Him, slowly riding down Mount Olivet. It was a wonderful scene, a demonstration of His power over the "common people," "who heard Him gladly," while Scribe and Pharisee were plotting to take His life. It was also a prophecy of the ages that were to come, when His power would be still more triumphantly exhibited in the hearts of the people. Would that in this our day the cry might go up, "Hosanna! Blessed

is He that cometh in the name of the Lord!" for no preceding age has more deeply needed to crown its secular glory with the influence of Him who entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday; and perhaps every age as it passes should feel more deeply obligated to illustrate the highest possibilities of the Christian civilization, because of the ever-increasing evidence of Christ's power to lift man individually and collectively above his natural self, to bestow upon him a nobler life and to prepare him for a higher destiny. It is Christ alone who communizes human society and opens the highest attainments to the lowliest. There is no privileged class in the acquisition of holiness. I imagined yesterday what might have occurred—a poor dwarf of a man at the edge of the crowd, withered, sickly, pale, very threadbare as to his dress. Although he had little strength, he pressed forward with the others, and his eyes rested lovingly on the Lord as He descended to the holy city. His voice was scarcely a voice, for, while his lips moved, those who were nearest to him heard not a sound, and thought it strange that he took no part in the far-spreading hosannas. So they asked him why. His reply was that he could not speak above a whisper and his voice failed him, so that he could barely hear his own hosanna, but that he did the best he could, which he knew was not much, and that it

was with joy in his heart that he added his trembling note to the praises of the Son of David. Then the Lord, turning His head and looking that way, said, Every word that came from the lips of My disciple did Mine ears hear with joy.

Tauler, the great Dominican preacher of the fourteenth century, held that the call of the Lord to pure devotion was not limited to class or condition. The life which he taught and exemplified was open to the lowliest. While he extolled the "evangelical counsels," he held that the highest perfection was attainable by a married cobbler working to maintain his family. It is not necessary to withdraw from the world in order to enter into union with God, and to cultivate the exalted graces that accompany it. The nearer a man draws to God and the more definitely he loses himself in the divine will, the more practical must his life become. I remember how Tauler in one of his sermons, says, if he were apart from the world, engaged in contemplation of the Uncreated Essence, and were called to minister to one in distress, it would be at once a duty and a pleasure to him to break away from his rapture and obey the call of charity.

THE THIRTY-SIXTH DAY



THE truth which stands forth in beauty and power at this sacred time is the call of God to every soul to abandon incompleteness and its attendant unrest, in order to find refuge and repose in the ultimate Reality, and to enjoy the blessedness of actual communion with Him. This is conscious spiritual union, confirmed, habitual, triumphant. It is the life of prayer.

When a Christian man has entered the unitive way he is dead to his own will, and all his powers work under that One Will which orders all things; in his memory by continual remembrance of Him, in his mind by continual thought of Him, in his will by always willing to love Him, in his hopes by looking forward to eternal participation in His

presence. In other words, he moves along the lines of God's will, sweetly and spontaneously, from the motive of loving preference for them.

2. But the life of prayer does not liberate the soul from the necessity of continual defense against uneliminated enmity within. Even those who attain the most signal graces of sanctity have to watch and fight. "For (says an old writer) just as he who is to go to Colen is not content to pass over the Rhine only, nor stops he there, but continueth on his journey until he cometh to Colen, so also we must always be going forward and looking still further on to more internal purification." He maintains a close watch against the ghosts of old habits, and renounces the very thought of them when they appear, especially those which find their occasion in the senses. The senses are not necessary to the action of the spirit, for spiritual things are spiritually discerned, but they were in operation before the mind began to develop. They gain such mastery in youth that perfect independence of them comes only when they die. But God gives wonderful help to those who seek it habitually, and, in moments of special weakness, with special importunity. To love God, the senses are not needed, and their action should be repelled. The reality of the man is his soul. The kingdom is within him,

and who is *he*? Certainly he is not his body or its senses; they are only a temporary abode; *he* is a tabernacled spirit. His body is a temple of the Holy Ghost only because his spirit is within; within which spirit God condescends to dwell. When the senses revive their broken powers, the one necessary and efficacious response a man should make is the instant speeding of the will to the contest, and the engaging of all its energies *on the side of his spirit*. That is the side of the Holy Spirit also.

3. In the life of prayer the wise man is delivered from the error of counting himself to be under exposure for forgiven sins. The thunderstorms of years ago, why should he tremble at them? Nor does he permit himself to despair if sometimes he gets weary in the long struggle. There is much sympathy in the heavenly home for soldiers at the front who feel the stress and strain of the battle. He will not be terrified overmuch when he feels unaccountable aversions to spiritual exercises, or a disposition to relax his efforts, or, worse still, a temptation to give them up—such a feeling as some have when, at the brink of a precipice or on a high building, they experience an inclination to leap headlong down. He thinks himself far from the path because he is far from the end of it. He despairs of perfection because there remain so

many imperfections to be overcome. But these are only passing temptations. They do not represent the tenor of his life and are not the voluntary product of his will.

He knows where his strength is. He keeps his *will* on the side of his *spirit*. Fleeing from assaults which are repulsive to him, he takes refuge in the divine love, and folds the divine will about him like a cloak. His will knows no refuge but the protection of the Holy Spirit.

4. The confidence of his soul inspires him with good cheer. As God loves a cheerful giver, He loves him when the gift is a trusting heart. The soul that is united to Him is filled with His joy, and this so copiously that it is not in the power of any form of trouble to make him really unhappy, or of any earthly attraction to draw him away. When S. Francis of Sales once, after a period of exhausting activity in his diocese, sought refreshment in a game of chess, a spiritual martinet asked what he would do if the Lord's advent were near at hand. He replied that he would finish the game, for, for His glory he began it. Nor must he who lives the life of prayer be discouraged by not being always able to keep himself up to the level of his best moments. In periods of recollection and clear vision, self-consciousness is abated, humility sinks beneath its usual

level, and there ensues a serene beholding of the awful majesty, the ineffable beauty, the immaculate holiness, and the mysterious condescension of this wonderful Being. He doeth all things well, to Him there is no shadow on His world, nothing happens without Him, and He who is happy in Himself sometimes permits His children to sip a little from that chalice. A strange felicity pervades the soul. It is not feeling so much as influence. It is the divine joy imparting itself as the beauty of the sky imparts itself to an appreciative eye. "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." This light of the divine smile does not continue to shine visibly, but while it does, the whole world is bathed in light, and when it returns to heaven the soul is stronger to endure the shadows of life. The afterglow of peace is wonderful. But these apprehensions of the nature and glory of God are favors not steadily present in his consciousness. There are many things which it were unfair to call distractions, which have a right to claim attention, and he may rest assured that God will make allowance for the infirmities of the creature when duty requires him to give his thoughts other directions. It is enough if his whole being is built up on a solid preference for God, which nothing can unsettle. "From God to God" will be his motto.

THE THIRTY-SEVENTH DAY

“Always his downcast eye
Was laughing silently,
As if he found some jubilee in thinking;
For his one thought was God,
In that one thought he abode,
Forever in that thought more deeply sinking.”



THE presence of God is the proper glory of any place and all places are beautiful if we find Him there. The life of prayer is therefore independent of place and is practicable under the most adverse environment. Those who plead lot, or business, or association, against the Lenten call to come up higher, should consider that divine grace has transformed Magdalens into saints.

The man of the poet's lines was no imaginary saint. Men

“Who carry music in their heart
Through dusky lane and wrangling mart,”
dwell among us and we know them not. “His one thought was God.” There are other thoughts it

is such a man's duty to think, a thousand of them ; for his lot is cast in a world of relation and association where he cannot shirk a single duty, no matter how earthly it may be, nor is anything irksome to him which is a duty, for his doing it is unto God. He meets every occasion with alacrity and is regarded as competent in business, a patriotic citizen, a friend of good causes, a person whom men trust, without asking themselves why. Nevertheless, his inner heart is elsewhere, for he is a God-fascinated man. It is written all over his life that religious principle controls him, but behind that is a life not visible to all eyes, the life of prayer, the life hid with Christ in God. This is something which he does not talk about, it is between him and his God ; and as certain insects grow to the color of the plants upon which they feed, so his character is more and more beautified by Him with whom he is united in the silent depths of being. Like other men, he has to face cares and risks of business and the fluctuations of fortune, but his trust is so strong that he does not murmur. There is not a trace of remonstrance on his face when disaster befalls him. No, that face is positively luminous with joy, for he knows that God is as good as He is wise, and his experience now of long duration, has demonstrated the great gain there is in losses. He also practises the

art of refraining from solicitude about the future, for God who now reigns shall never cease to reign. But he is not so unlike the rest of us that he never yields to the strain that even love feels in the pathway of faith. At times he *resumes himself*, and then doubt and unrest enter and peace departs; but he is able to detect the self-love that caused it, and by timely penance drives it hence. Nor is this saintly sinner without faults and angularities, but a temperament naturally impetuous has come under control and now flows as calmly as a river. There is an inward force which works outward upon his life and brings all his powers into a beautiful unison. Evidently his faith is more than trust,—it is *possession*. God is the one reality whom he knows, and he knows that he knows. He feels the immeasurable contrast between his attainments and the ideal presented in the person of Jesus Christ, but this only tightens his grasp on the Cross, he having long since learned how imbecile a thing it is to flee from God because of sin. No truth means more to him than that there is room for all the broken hearts of the world in the bosom of the Father. His thoughts resting in God, he possesses his soul in all quietness when misunderstood and misrepresented by others, injured and evil-spoken of without a cause for which he is responsible; for the disciple should

not dread the injustice of losing his good name if it be for His sake who made Himself of no reputation for our sake. It would be easier to go to the stake, but to the stake would he go rather than lose his vision of God. He not only glories in the cross, but he gets blessings from the crucifixion and forgives the crucifiers. His love embraces them all.

Men of this stamp are not figures in stained glass, brilliant with the vestments of ages long gone, but flesh and blood saints walking the green earth, and showing us how to live in the world unworldly lives, and how to burn with the fire of divine love while they are diligent in their earthly affairs and interested in what are called things temporal. May their tribe increase!

THE THIRTY-EIGHTH DAY



HIS is the day of the Holy Supper, and the day of the treachery of an apostle. O, strange concurrence! The betrayal was impending in the very hour when the Saviour instituted the sacrament of undying love, and it was known to both. "Master, is it I?" "Thou hast said." Thus sin in its most monstrous form exhibited its devilish audacity in the very presence of the incarnation of Divine holiness. But let us turn away from the dejecting remembrance of man's treason, and gladden our hearts in those holy mysteries which "He hath instituted and ordained as pledges of His love, and for a continual remembrance of His death to our great and endless comfort."

Of this life-giving sacrament the efficacy dwells in Him who instituted it, and who tabernacles

Himself in it. Herein He puts forth all His gracious energies to enrich those who draw near with faith. There is no dead Christ, and the living Christ is present to accomplish His purpose, which is "to be our spiritual food and sustenance." He seeks His recompense for the death He died by making us "one body with Him that He may dwell in us and we in Him." What is this but that union with God wherein the soul gives itself to Him by entire surrender, and He gives Himself to the soul as the principle of its life and the motive of all its actions? His only object in making us "partakers of His most blessed Body and Blood" is that He may communicate to us His spirit, and inspire us with humble ardor to acquire the highest virtues of the Christian life. If a man were to receive but once in the right spirit he would receive grace enough to enable him to live becomingly all his days. How much more those who approach the altar frequently!

The favors which of His good will our Lord bestows are immeasurable. "Open wide thy mouth and I will fill it." A favor of wonderful value, prior to the greatest, is the preparatory help He gives; for unless the heart is ready for its divine guest, how can it receive Him worthily? In other times the deacon of the Mass announced, *Sancta sanctis*, Holy things to the holy. This divine sac-

rament is milk for babes, and solid food for the strong, but of no profit to the presumptuous. It is necessary to aspire with all urgency after sanctity, and to cultivate a corresponding life far removed from torpidity or formality, unless we would convert a remedy into a poison. There is much need for reform in this matter. Preparation is a missing factor. "Let a man examine himself and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. . . . For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep."

Penetrated with the greatness of the favors which He offers and conveys in this pledge of His love, the soul, sensible of a hunger always new, approaches the altar with a zeal in some degree correspondent to the fervent desire of his Lord, and brings to remembrance the mysteries of His Passion, of which this is the memorial, unites himself with His sufferings, gives tender thanks for His dying love, and offers himself an oblation to the Father in union with the sacrifice of the Cross. He comes to this holy place as to a new paradise of the earth which God has planted in order that he may enjoy a prelude of the happiness of heaven. Eating the Flesh and drinking the Blood, he enters into a spiritual compact with Christ to die unto the world, unto self, unto sin, unto all predominant love for creatures, and to live the life of

Him who has taken up His abode within. These and a hundred secret whispers of devotion he addresses to his Lord, yielding himself up to His control for to-day, for all days, for eternity.

The time and the place are most propitious for seeking His favors on behalf of all the world. He who abundantly poured out His blood for that world will not refuse to pour upon it His grace. These are opportune moments for the voice of supplication and intercession, and for intimate colloquies with Him who is so near.

“And now, O Father, mindful of the love
That bought us once for all, on Calvary’s tree,
And having with us Him that pleads above,
We here present, we here spread forth to Thee,
That only offering perfect in Thine eyes,
The one, true, pure, immortal sacrifice.

“For all Thy Church, O Lord, we intercede;
Make Thou our sad divisions soon to cease;
Draw us the nearer each to each, we plead,
By drawing all to Thee, O Prince of Peace;
Thus may we all one Bread, one Body be,
Through this blest sacrament of Unity.

“And then for those, our dearest and our best
By this prevailing presence we appeal;
Oh, fold them closer to Thy mercy’s breast!
Oh, do Thine utmost for their souls’ true weal!
From tainting mischief keep them white and clear,
And crown Thy gifts with strength to persevere.”

THE THIRTY-NINTH DAY



ON THIS fateful day we think of our Lord's extremity of woe, the like of which the world never saw. There has lived but one man who was without sin or liability to it, and yet this man was not only the victim of misfortune, but was adjudged to the fate of a malefactor. Condemned by imperial Rome at the instigation of His own countrymen, who brought lying accusations against Him, He was subjected to the most disgraceful mode of capital punishment. The horrors of physical maltreatment culminated in the greater tragedy of spiritual dereliction when He uttered that terrifying appeal to the Father. It expressed the agony of a heart that knew its own integrity, but must needs feel to its very core

the absence of divine consolations. His pure human soul was left to itself. It was a part of His sacrifice that He, who by His death would restore us to union with God, should taste the pang of separation from Him. One momentary taste was enough. Abandoned for a single tragic moment to the power of darkness, He was also deserted by His friends when He most needed them and was least able to dispense with the sympathy of those who, while they loved, had lost the courage of their love. Alas! the feebleness of their loyalty was accentuated by the treason of one whom He had trusted, and who for greed's sake betrayed Him to the Hebrew hounds who hunted Him down to death.

But, although gross darkness gathers over Golgotha, we are permitted to think of His extremity as man's opportunity. By His stripes we are healed. That He might fetch home to God all wandering souls was His motive from Bethlehem's night to Easter's morning. His death on the Cross was a real propitiation for sin. Wicked hands nailed Him there, but the Divine foresight which saw the deed determined to overrule the wrath of man, and appoint the result of their crime to be a sacrifice and oblation for the sins of the world. Reverently, therefore, the tears of gratitude and

penitence blinding our eyes, do we contemplate the tragic scene.

“Drop, drop slow tears!
 And bathe those beauteous feet
 Which brought from heaven
 The news and Prince of Peace.
 Cease not, wet eyes,
 For mercy to entreat:
 To cry for vengeance
 Sin doth never cease.
 In your deep floods
 Drown all my faults and fears;
 Nor let His eye
 See sin but through my tears.”

But, while the Church kneels in silence of adoration before the life-giving death and listens to the cry of a heart about to break, “all ye that pass by, behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow,” it is impossible by a devout fiction of the imagination to feel that we hear death’s boast of victory, for that Cross is not the defeat of love. He who died, did not remain dead. There is nowhere now a dying or dead Christ. Only in imagination is the Church paying her devotion at the tomb of Joseph. Only in memory do we hear His seven last words. The reality of this Good Friday is not a tragedy outside the city’s walls, a crucifixion witnessed by mad Jews, brutal soldiery and a group of unterrified women, but a moral triumph of unparalleled sublimity, which has

changed the history of ages and lifted man up to a new life. He who had not where to lay His head is now seated at the right hand of God, crowned with glory and honor. We may recall that Man of sorrows, whose mission it was to crimson the earth with His blood and to descend to the dark silence of a tomb, but we must not permit ourselves to overlook the present truth that *there is no dead Christ*. His humanity was imprisoned only for a little while in the grave, and by His ascension passed upward into relation with the glory which the Eternal Son had before the world was. The flaming sword which turned every way at the east of the garden no longer forbids our return, and there the cherubim no longer stand as warders of a world from which man was justly expelled. The Second Adam, even the Lord from heaven, was "taken up" out of this planet into the realm of the infinite, from the mount called Olivet into the clouds, from the clouds into the sphere transcendent. Millions now gathered to His presence, and millions on their way thither, honor Him as their living Lord with an ear to hear their prayers, a heart to suffer with them in all their sorrows, and a hand to lead them through green pastures and by still waters.

THE FORTIETH DAY



HIS is Easter Even—the day of the silence of death. The Crucified lies in the tomb of Joseph as to His beloved body; His soul has descended into the lower parts of the earth for the love He bears to “the spirits in prison.” At the first moment, He flies thither to proclaim to them the glad tidings for which they have waited since before the deluge. Living, dying, dead, He is moved with compassion for needy souls and would save His people from their sins to the uttermost. What unspeakable joy to Him and what a jubilee to them!

2. How the silence of death spreads over the world! In every generation as many as are born find their graves. They are all on common

ground at last. They sleep in "the Field of Peace." All the former distinctions of wealth, rank, color, sect and nationality, and all the estrangements thereby caused among men of one blood, have shrunk to nothingness. I have been reading the obituary notices contained in the papers of six or seven religious bodies, and find in them a sweet and holy communion of dying experience. The closing eyes look up and not askance. At last, at last, their gaze is averted from distinctions and fixed on a common Father. No controversial bitterness on those countenances now, but serenity and expectation. The champion of the political world, the theologian who contended for his little shibboleth, the general who led great armies, now lies down in peace with all the world. Death stands by the bedside, but the shine of heaven goes through his form and paints a smile on those white faces. Their lips murmur farewell in the same language, and their spirits soar away in the same direction. Their bodies will sleep in common ground at last. It is the triumph of love; but oh, if the victory had been won a little earlier!

3. Death is the emancipation of the soul, but the change is one for which there is no analogy in experience. That the soul will feel the change deeply there is no doubt. It has been so long

associated with the body that the termination of the partnership must be a startling event. For a whole life-time the mind has received a constant influx of sensations from the nervous system, but at death every nerve will have fulfilled its destiny, and there is an end of it. Henceforth the external world, with its myriads of objects, will make no impression on the mind through the senses, for they will have ceased to exist. To enter suddenly upon a disembodied state, in which the *ego* is spirit only, must be attended with strange and surprising emotions. Alone! alone! The will and understanding, the memory and affections existing in a state of incorporeality wholly independent of physical concomitance—what a novel experience this will be! But it will be hailed with gratitude by those who on earth felt and hated the pertinacious antagonism of the senses and the occasions of sin which the physical functions ever pressed upon the soul. Ah, what burdens this perishable body puts upon the spirit of man,—their name is legion. Death is indeed an emancipation!

4. While the conditions of the new life are not clearly revealed, there are some things which may be safely accepted with regard to the departed. They are in a state of consciousness, and therefore of self-consciousness. What they once called the future state, and which seemed to be

more a dream than a reality, is now the reality. If sometimes formerly a doubt disturbed their minds it has vanished, for eternal life is now an experience—a fact of consciousness. And how absurd now appears the old fallacy that life gets its supreme motive from the earth, and that it is more consonant with man's nature to devote himself to interests and duties that are at hand rather than to be solicitous about remote destinies. But the seemingly fixed conditions of earthly life are now seen to have been transitory, with less relation to themselves than to the enduring life to which they pointed, and for which they were designed to be a preparation. Nor has there been any change as to personal identity. Each one is the same individual, except that he is disembodied.

They are still in possession of their intellectual faculties. Unembarrassed by the impediments of the flesh, they think more lucidly and reason more forcibly. They retain memory, and by its aid can rehearse the scenes of their life on this planet with mingled emotions of regret and gratitude. Their will is in absolute unison with God; every wish is gratified and they wish nothing but the will of God.

Their affections abide. Absorbed in the beatific vision and feeling the gentle pressure of new forms of service, they do not forget to love and

labor as never before for those whom they have left behind for a little while. As love flowers out into the more beauteous bloom of the promised land, its perfume ascends like incense on our behalf to God. The bonds of affection were not dissolved by death, for love is immortal; and as they become conscious in God that we are following them with messages of good desire for their peace and perpetual light, our prayers for them mingle with theirs for us before the presence of the Majesty on high. Because love is immortal, they anticipate with joy the embarkation from distant lands of those whom they shall welcome to celestial shores. It is their undying affection which lightens our pathway, and cheers us during the gloom of separation. "Whatever may be the indistinctness of the future, the groups of friendship are there; they make the best part of its scenery; and wherever they are is a shelter and a home. However strange to us the colony may be in which they dwell, if as we cross the deeps of death their visionary forms shall crowd the shore and people the hills of that unvisited abode, it will be to us 'a better country, even a heavenly.'"

They have found blissful use for their faculties. We may liken their entrance upon life in the fatherland of the soul to our entrance at birth on earthly existence. They are strange to

their home, though it is their first real home, and they need loving welcome. They are unused to their new conditions, and must be cared for and watched over. They are ignorant of many things and require instruction. Nor will there be any lack, for the great Teacher is there to enlighten them in the ways of heaven, and many others are there who eagerly desire to minister to the welcomed friends of other years.

They are in consummated union with Him whom they learned to honor while they were still in the body. Memory, recalling the past, perceives how imperfect that honor and love were because they did not appreciate Him as they ought. When they might have had vast perceptions of His glory and beauty, they were content with a glimpse; and now it behooves them to learn all that was left unlearned. Just because they are nearer to the source of light, the deeper are the shadows of remembered half-heartedness in the service of God, and the more acute the penitence they feel. Severe though these reminders of the past may be, they are remedial. The ardors of purifying love will make them meet for the final inheritance of the saints in light. Then, then in that day of the Lord, that "morning without clouds," shall they rise to heights of spiritual apprehension never before attained, and shall per-

ceive His Majesty to be so stupendous in power, so glorious in holiness, so transcendent in knowledge and wisdom, so fascinating in moral splendor, so infallible in counsel, so exquisite in His perception of the beautiful, and so sublime beyond similitude or symbol in His infiniteness that the mind will be overwhelmed with adoration, the heart melted with love, and the will fused into His will forever.

This is the last day of another Lent,—the day of the silence of the grave, the victory of death.

But death was deceived. He thought he had gotten him the victory, and with the yielding of the ghost about the ninth hour had secured dominion over the Son of God. But early on the third day Christ rose again from the dead, and death had no more dominion over Him. He who voluntarily gave up His human life took it back again, and is alive forevermore. O, the beautiful reappearance of a life which the grave could not

retain! It takes the sting from the three days of silence, it sings the song of the lark high above doubts and fears, it bids me renew with firmer step my forward march to heaven.

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